In Another World With My Smartphone

21

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THE BIG DAY...
HAS COME AT LAST!


"COME GET YOUR FORTUNE TOLD! ONLY AT CLASS 2-C!"
"CANDY APPLES! GET YOUR CANDY APPLES HERE!"
We passed through the school gates, only to be greeted by many overlapping voices. The festival was buzzing with excitement.

Character Profiles



One of Touya's fiancees.
The elder of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. A ferocious melee fighter, she makes use of gauntlets in combat. Her personality is fairly to-the-point and blunt.
She can make use of Null fortification magic, specifically the spell **[Boost]**. She loves spicy foods.



One of Touya's fiancees.
Princess of the Belfast Kingdom. She was twelve years old in her initial appearance, and her eyes are heterochromatic. The right is blue, while the left is green. She has mystic eyes that can discern the true character of an individual. She has three magical aptitudes: Earth, Wind, and Darkness. She's also extremely proficient with a bow and arrow. She fell in love with Touya at first sight.



A highschooler who was accidentally murdered by God. He's a no-hassle kind of guy who likes to go with the flow. He's not very good at reading the atmosphere, and typically makes rash decisions that bite him in the ass. His mana pool is limitless, he can flawlessly make use of every magical element, and he can cast any Null spell that he wants. He's currently the Grand Duke of Brunhild.



One of Touya's fiancees.
She was ten years old in her initial appearance. Her nickname is Sue. The niece of Belfast's king, and Yumina's cousin. Touya saved her from being attacked on the road. She has an innocently adventurous spirit.



One of Touya's fiancees.
The Third Princess of the Regulus Empire, she's Yumina's age. She fell in love with Touya when he saved her during a coup. She likes to fight with twin blades, and she's on good terms with Yumina.



One of Touya's fiancees.
A samurai girl from the far eastern land of Eashen, a country much like Japan. She tends to repeat herself and speak formally, she does. Yae is quite a glutton, eating more than most normal people would dare touch. She's a hard worker, but can sometimes slack off. Her family runs a dojo back in Eashen, and they take great pride in their craft. It's not obvious at first, but her boobs are pretty big.



One of Touya's fiancees.
The younger of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago.
She wields magic, specifically from the schools of Light, Water, and Fire. She finds talking to people difficult due to her own shy nature, but she is known to be surprisingly bold at times. Rumors say she might be the kind of girl who enjoys male on male romance... She loves sweet foods.



A stuffed toy bear animated by years upon years of the **[Program]** spell. She's the result of two-hundred years of programmed commands, making her seem like a fully aware living being. Paula... Paula's the worst!



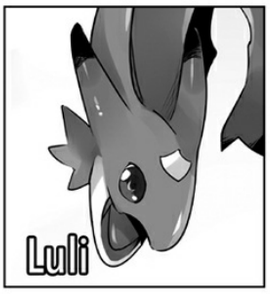
A mysterious girl Touya rescued in Eashen. She had lost her memories, but has now finally gotten them back. Her true identity is Farnese Forneus, daughter of the Xenoahs Overlord. Currently living a peaceful life in Brunhild, and she has joined the ranks of Touya's fiancees.



One of Touya's fiancees.
Former Clan Matriarch of the Fairies, she now serves as Brunhild's Court Magician. She claims to be six-hundred-and-twelve years old, but looks tremendously young. She can wield every magical element except Darkness, meaning her magical proficiency is that of a genius. Leen is a bit of a light-hearted bully.



One of Touya's fiancees.
First Princess of the Knight Kingdom Lestia. Her swordplay talents earned her a reputation as a 'Knight Princess'. Touya saved her life when she was attacked by a group of Phrase, and she's loved him ever since. She's a good friend of Yae, and she stammers a bit when flustered.



The fourth of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Azure Monarch, the ruler of dragons. She often clashes with Kohaku due to her condescending personality.



The third of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Flame Monarch, ruler of feathered things. Though her appearance is flashy and extravagant, she's actually quite cool and collected.



The second of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. They are the Black Monarch, two in one. The rulers of scaled beasts. They can freely manipulate water. Sango is a tortoise, and Kokuyou is a snake. Sango is a female, and Kokuyou is a male (but he's very much a female at heart).



The first of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She's the White Monarch, the ruler of beasts, the guardian of the west and a beautiful White Tiger. She can create devastating shockwaves, and also change size at will.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Workshop, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Rosetta for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #27. For whatever reason, she's the most reliable of the bunch.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hanging Garden, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Cesca for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #23. She likes to tell very inappropriate jokes.



The God of Swords.
Claims to be Touya's older sister. She trains the and advises the knights of Brunhild. She's gallant and brave, but also a bit of an airhead at times.



The God of Love.
Claims to be Touya's older sister. She stays in Brunhild because she says she needs to catch a servile god, but doesn't really do all that much in the way of hunting him. She's a total pain in the butt.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Tower, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Noel for short and wears a jersey. Her Airframe Serial Number is #25. She sleeps all the time, and eats laying down. Her tremendous laziness means she doesn't do all that much.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Rampart, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Liora for short and wears a blazer. Her Airframe Serial Number is #20. She's the oldest of the Babylon Gynoids, and would attend to the... Personal night-time needs of Doctor Babylon herself. She has no experience with men.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hangar, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Monica for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #28. She's a funny little hard worker who has a bit of a casual streak. She's a good friend of Rosetta, and is the Gynoid with the most knowledge of the Frame Gears.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Alchemy Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Flora for short and wears a nurse outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #21. A nurse with dangerously big boobs and even more dangerous medicines.



An ancient genius from a lost civilization, reborn into an artificial body that resembles a small girl. She is the "Babylon" that created the many artifacts and forgotten technologies scattered around the world today. Her Airframe serial number is #29. She remained in stasis for five-thousand years before finally being awakened.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Research Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Tica for short. Her Airframe serial number is #22. Of the Babylon Numbers, she is the one who best embodies Doctor Babylon's inappropriately perverse side.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Storehouse, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Parshe for short and wears a shrine maiden outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #26. She's tremendously clumsy, even if she's just trying to help. The amount of stuff she ruins is troublingly high.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Library, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Fam for short and wears a school uniform. Her Airframe Serial Number is #24. She's a total book fanatic and hates being interrupted when she's reading.

The Worlds of
In Another World With My Smartphone
World Map

The Story So Far!

Mochizuki Touya, wielding a smartphone customized by God himself, continues to live his life in a newly formed double-world! The war against the Wicked God, which threatened the existence of two innocent worlds, has finally come to an end. Touya has emerged victorious, but at what cost? Now he's saddled with divine duties! Awakened to godliness! Our hapless young lad is to be caretaker of the newly-created world.
Fortunately, things seem to be at peace. But could this only be a surface observation? The seeds of discord are sown out of sight, and chaos could very well burst from the dark... How will Touya fare in his new station? Only time will tell.

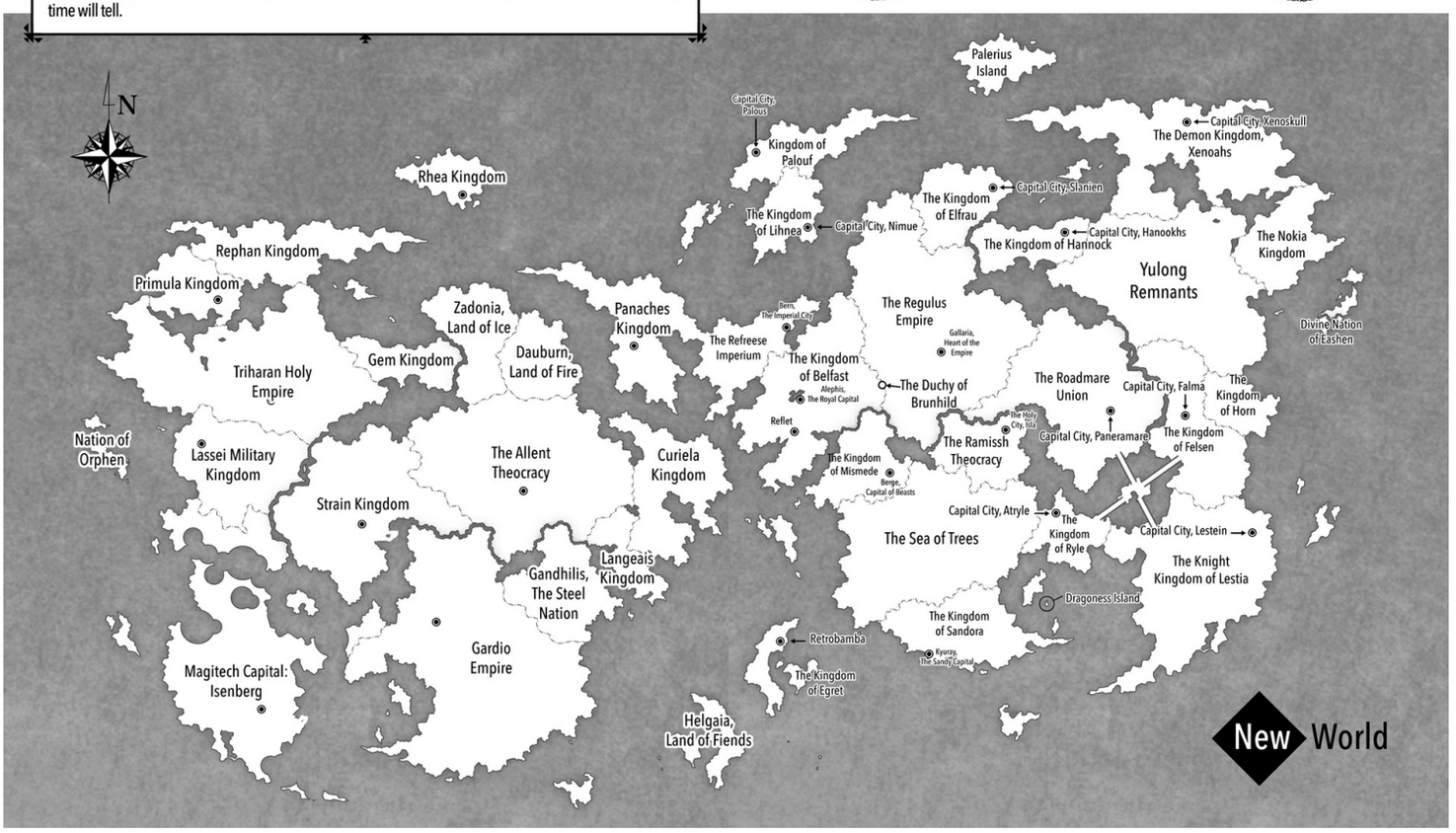


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Chapter I: Before the Wedding

“This should be it for the invites...”

“Very well, I shall send them through the Gate Mirrors at once. Those with local addresses will be distributed by the knights.”

“Thanks a bunch.”

Laim, the butler, bowed after taking a huge bundle of stamped wedding invitations from me. My shoulder hurt like hell. It was the first time in my life I’d used my official wax seal so much in one sitting. Wedding invitations were a lot more difficult than mass emails, that much was for sure.

The original plan was to get confirmation of attendants, then use **[Gate]** to bring them all to Brunhild on the day of the wedding. But fortunately, Granny Tokie decided to take that burden off my hands. She was definitely better than me when it came to Space-time alteration, so it was a major relief that she’d offered to help out.

I took out my smartphone and pulled up the to-do list.

“Now all that’s left is... the souvenirs...”

In this world, there wasn’t any tradition of giving wedding gifts, but some wedding parties prepared souvenirs to give away to the guests as they prepared to leave. That kind of practice existed back in Japan as well, but it wasn’t particularly common.

I wasn’t sure what to hand out as the wedding souvenir, though. I briefly considered collectible mugs or plates with our faces on them, but I didn’t know if that would be well-received.

“Hmm... Let’s see... Maybe I can get some ideas online...?”

I browsed online until I came across some gift catalogs. And I suddenly cooked up a bright idea as I gazed at it. If I showed the catalogs to our guests, I could just have them individually choose the kinds of souvenirs they wanted.

Still, most of our guests were nobility, so I wasn’t entirely sure if they’d want

to pick out ordinary things like tableware, bags, and stuff like that. That was why I decided to come up with my own catalog with interesting and exotic items. A massage chair seemed like a good idea, and unusual foodstuffs seemed smart as well...

Hmm... Maybe instant curry pouches? Eh... I'm not so sure that's the best idea. Maybe weapons or armor would be good. Oh, how about a magic-boosting accessory or something? I'm sure people would jump at the chance to get their hands on an artifact of some sort.

The possibilities were truly endless.

"Man, I could use a change of scenery..."

I put my phone back in my pocket and left the room. A little walk around the castle felt nice from time to time. I had a few duties to attend to, but nothing urgent. I was blessed to have plenty of capable subordinates who kept things running smoothly.

I walked through the halls, smiling at the maids who busied themselves sweeping. Eventually, I made my way out to the training grounds. Everyone appeared hard at work. They all quietly clashed against each other with wooden swords, honing their skills. I was pretty impressed by how well-built most of them had become.

"Hm?"

By the side of the training grounds, sitting on a bench, was a girl staring toward the sky. It was Elze. She was sitting idly, a water bottle and her gauntlets by her side. I wondered if she was taking a break or something. She hadn't noticed me, so I slowly crept up on her in an attempt to surprise her.

I positioned myself behind her before reaching forward and covering her eyes with my hands.

"Guess wh—? AUGH?!"

"Whuh?! T-Touya?!"

Elze struck me on reflex, making a loud cracking sound ring out. It felt like she'd busted my nose!

“S-Sorry! I-I didn’t mean to do that!”

“I-It’s okay... That was my bad...”

I should’ve known better than to expect anything else from Elze. She wasn’t the kind of girl who’d react to something so playful with anything less than a strike to the schnozz.

Holy crap, I’m bleeding... She made me bleed a ton! Elze is probably stronger than any bad guy I’ve faced so far at this point...

“Come forth, Light! Soothing Comfort: [Cure Heal].”

I had to use magic on my face to heal myself, which I honestly didn’t ever think I’d have to do. I made a mental note to never surprise Elze ever again.

“A-Ah, good... The bleeding stopped. Sorry again...”

“Nah, don’t worry about it. I shouldn’t have tried to spook you. How come you were all spaced out, anyway?”

“Oh, well... It’s just... I thought about how we’re getting married, and then I kinda freaked out...”

Elze let out a sigh, laughing softly as I sat down next to her.

W-Wait, are these the pre-wedding blues I’ve heard so much about?! Sometimes a person can get nervous about their impending marriage, which turns into cold feet about the whole thing... In some cases, people even call it off! Wh-Wh-What should I do?! Does she want to cancel the wedding?!

“D-Do you have anxieties or something?”

“Anxieties? Yeah. A ton.”

A ton?!

A cold sweat broke out along my brow.

“I’m just thinking about how I’m gonna be a grand duchess, y’know? I’ll have a bunch of social responsibilities and stuff. Plus, if I have a kid, they’ll be a prince or a princess... so I gotta make sure they’re raised proper and all. Whenever I think about that, I get really anxious. I’m not sure if I’m up to that, y’know?”

“You dummy.”

“Owie!”

I lightly chopped Elze’s head, which made her let out a little yelp.

“You’re thinking too hard. You don’t need to change when you’re royalty. I’m the grand duke, yeah? But I’m still me. So you can still be you, Elze. You won’t be raising any kids alone, either. You have me and the other girls by your side. It’s all gonna be just fine, I can feel it. I promise you that. I want to make you happy, and I’m sure I will. We’ll live as a happy family. Hell, all kinds of gods have already given us their blessing.”

Elze pouted a little as she rubbed her head, but my words gradually made her smile.

“Hehehe... Is that right? I guess if you bring the gods into it, that’s a bit more of a relief. A little unfair of you to use that, though... Nobody else can call on gods for help like you.”

If it helped soothe Elze’s anxiety even a little, I was willing to be as unfair as humanly possible. After all, I wanted to see Elze wearing a big smile on her face, no matter what came our way. That smile of hers was one of the reasons I could soldier on in a new world.

“Don’t worry about this kind of thing on your own, okay? We’ll be together for the rest of our lives, so start relying on me some more.”

“You’re right. Thanks for letting me vent. I know we’re in this together, so I won’t let my fears get the better of me.”

Elze stood up from the bench and did a few warm-up stretches. Then, she turned around and gave me that big beaming smile I loved so much.

“Thank you, Touya.”

“It’s a husband’s job to listen to his wife’s problems. I just hope I helped.”

“W-Wife?! G-Geez, Touya... We’re not even married yet... Ehehe...”

Elze’s face turned beet red, which prompted her to turn on her heel and head back toward the training grounds. Maybe I got a little carried away, but she was a lot of fun to tease. So long as she wasn’t mad, that was fine by me.

“Wait, crap... I should’ve asked her for wedding souvenir ideas.”

“Hm? Touya-dono? Are you sunbathing, are you?”

As I sat back on the bench, Yae and Hilde suddenly approached me. Based on their wooden swords, I presumed they’d been training together. I was honestly glad about how well they got along.

Given that Elze had some anxieties, I decided to ask them if they were worried at all.

“Anxieties, huh...?”

“Umm... I wonder, I do...”

The two of them turned to each other, as if deep in thought. Frankly, I’d have been more than happy if they didn’t have any immediate concerns.

They spent a few moments thinking. Then, Yae finally nodded in my direction.

“There is one thing bothering me, there is.”

“Hm? What’s that?”

“The food at the wedding ceremony... Is it true that I must refrain from eating large portions, is it?”

Well... that’s definitely a Yae anxiety.

Hilde also spoke up, though much more quietly.

“I-I, um... If I get pregnant... I won’t be able to train so severely, will I...? I-I don’t want to gain weight...”

Wow. Someone’s planning ahead. It’s true that I don’t want her to overdo it while she’s pregnant, though...

I was pleased to hear that Yae and Hilde didn’t have any deep-seated fears like Elze did, to be honest.

“Why did you think we’d have anxieties?”

“Well, I think it’s normal to mull things over before you get married. It’s a big step in life, isn’t it? So it’s only natural it might put things in perspective.”

“I think marriage is a big step, but it’s also a partnership. There’ll surely be

problems that come our way, but the strength of our bond will allow us to overcome everything together.”

“Y-Yeah, you’re right...”

Hilde’s words burned bright with determination. She was the kind of girl who really shined when it came to tough situations, so it wasn’t too surprising that she wasn’t getting hung up on the small stuff.

“I believe in us all, I do. I think that we can accomplish anything together, we can.”

Yae felt exactly the same way. She believed in harmony and put it above all else. In her mind, we were probably already a big family, so the wedding was just a means of making things formal in the eyes of the law. That easygoing nature was one of the things I liked the most about her.

I wondered about how Linze was feeling, though. She was similar to Elze in quite a few ways, after all.

“Hm? Linze?”

“Linze-dono has been spending time with Tokie-dono, she has.”

That made sense. If I recalled correctly, they’d been knitting together on the balcony lately.

I didn’t want to hold up Yae and Hilde’s training any longer, so I activated **[Teleport]** and landed on the balcony outside our main sitting room.

Linze was there, sitting on a chair, knitting and singing to herself. In fact, she was so focused on her knitting that she hadn’t even realized I was there. She displayed some rather impressive concentration, really.

The image of her was so enthralling that I couldn’t help but stare at her for a while. Working so dutifully brought out her natural beauty.

“Huh...? Touya? When did you get here?”

“Oh, sorry. You seemed really focused, so I didn’t want to interrupt you.”

Linze seemed to notice how captivated I’d become, so I gave her a vague enough answer. Then, I sat down at the table, looking over at Linze. She tilted

her head in confusion.

“Is something wrong?”

“Well, it’s not a big deal. I was just wondering...” I outright asked her if she had any anxieties about the wedding. It was wrong of me to say it wasn’t a big deal, since I had no idea how she was feeling.

“Anxieties, hm? I’d say I have a few, but I think my excitement is outweighing it.”

“You’re excited?”

“I am. We’ll finally become a proper family. Once we have our children, we’ll make many memories with them, too... I’m really excited for that future.”

It seemed like Linze was more hopeful than nervous.

“But where’d this come from all of a sudden...? Oh, I see... Was it my sister?”

“Huh? How’d you know...?”

“Well, it’s Elze, you know? She’s been busy, but I’m sure she’s been thinking hard. That said, I bet once her anxieties are settled, she’ll be firmly okay about all of this.”

Linze really had a solid grasp on how her sister worked. It was quite amazing.

I glanced at the table in front of me, looking at the pile of stuff atop it.

“Ah, these? They’re a hat and some leg warmers... among other things.”

I picked up the hat on the table. It was made of soft yarn and, judging by the size, was perfect for a baby. There were rompers, socks, bibs, and other baby clothes as well.

“There’s enough for nine.”

“W-Wait... Isn’t it a little soon to be making these?!”

“Better safe than sorry, no?”

C-C’mon, Linze... We haven’t even done... y-you know... that *yet... Plus, I’m sure you won’t all get pregnant at the same time!*

It felt like Linze had already gotten past the wife stage and had made peace

with being a mother. Given her current lack of children, I didn't know whether to be amazed or concerned about her extreme maternal instinct.

Still, she seemed happy, which was more than enough for me.

Oh, right. I can ask Linze about the souvenirs.

"Hmm... Things for our guests? Desserts, maybe?"

Desserts... That's a little plain, but it could work. People would probably enjoy being sent home with some cakes or something.

"Any other ideas?"

"Hmm... Sue's staying over tonight, right? Why don't you ask everyone during the sleepover?" Linze clasped her hands together as she spoke, presenting what seemed like a decent idea.

I had slowly gotten used to the idea of them sleeping in the same room as me, but I still often ended up sleeping on the couch when they came over. I had a feeling I'd keep doing it until they forced me to stay in the bed with them... That was a little bit spineless of me, but I'd been making steps in my own way. For example, I'd recently gotten to the point where I could give them all goodnight kisses.

Either way, getting everyone's input about the wedding souvenir catalog seemed like a solid plan. I just wondered how many options to provide. Wedding ceremonies were no picnic, honestly. I'd been extremely busy, and I hadn't had a single moment to relax.

"Why not include some basic magic artifacts? You could create music boxes or something."

"Oh, yeah. Nice idea."

Leen, clad in her black pajamas, gave a suggestion. Music players would probably be popular with the nobles. Though some nobles had their own personal orchestras, so maybe they wouldn't want it. Regardless, I set it down in my notes.

We were discussing the situation atop our giant bed. Kohaku, Sango and Kokuyou, Kougyoku, Luli, and Albus were there too. They were sitting on the

floor, playing a board game I'd put together for them. Mr. Mittens wasn't there, however. He was hanging out with Sakura's mother.

"Wh—? Luli! I wanted to buy that property, you wretch!"

"First come, first served. It's not my fault that I landed on it. I think I'll buy a house for this spot, too..."

They were playing a board game where you traded properties, built houses on certain spots, and built hotels as well. It was quite a popular game. I decided to put it on the souvenir list after watching them have a good time.

Apparently, Sue was feeling a little bit homesick, giving her similar anxiety to Elze when she thought about her upcoming marriage. When the time came for her to live with me, she'd be separated from her parents, her little brother, and her faithful butler, Leim. I already told her she could go home through the portal in the castle any time she wanted, so that at least alleviated some of her concerns.

"We'll be starting a new family together, so at least I won't be lonely..." Sue said, trying to be brave even though I could tell she was going to miss everyone at the Ortlinde estate. I gave her a big hug, quietly vowing to make sure she always felt loved. Personally, I felt sorry for Duke Ortlinde, since he had to watch his daughter leave him.

"If it were me getting a wedding souvenir, I'd want a cooking set."

"Isn't that something more for a castle chef, though?"

Lu and Yumina chattered away with each other. It was true that most of the nobles we'd invited would hardly want to take cooking equipment back with them, but we weren't just inviting highborn people. There were plenty of commoners like Micah, Dolan, Barral, and Aer.

I had a feeling they'd get a lot of use out of some fancy home gear, so I decided to throw some more practical stuff on to the souvenir list as well.

"So, what kind of things are on that list?"

"Hm? Wanna see?"

I projected the current catalog into the air. A second later, Yae and Lu found

themselves drawn to the holographic images of various fancy-looking meals.

“Ooh... I want to eat that meaty dish, I do...”

“I’d love to try making it!”

“We’ll get to try it when we go over to that world, just be patient.”

I’d received permission from God Almighty to take the girls to Earth on a sightseeing trip after the wedding.

We spent the rest of the night picking out various items for the wedding souvenir catalog... Frankly, it wasn’t the most sensual of activities to do with one’s brides-to-be. I probably could have been a little more aggressive, if I’d only had the guts...

◇ ◇ ◇

I’d finally put together the catalog. I printed it off with **[Drawing],** then bound it into a book thanks to the workshop. People could select what they wanted, mark it off on a postcard, and then forward it to Brunhild.

The list was separated into three sections named A, B, and C. Honestly, the only thing that divided the sections was the price, but I didn’t really worry too hard about that, since I was making most of the gifts myself anyway.

I didn’t want any reselling of the goods going on, so I also made sure to uniquely identify each item with a serial code. That said, I didn’t expect any of my guests to actually do that.

It was now a week away from the wedding, and we’d just about finished the preparations. I was hanging around Brunhild like normal, while my fiancees had returned to their respective homes before the wedding.

Elze and Linze had gone back to their aunt and uncle’s farm in Refreese. Yae went back to her father’s dojo in Oedo, and Yumina had returned to Belfast Castle. Sue had headed off to the Ortlinde Estate, while Lu and Hilde respectively returned to the royal courts of Regulus and Lestia. Sakura had moved over to Xenoahs with her mother, where they’d be staying with Spica. That was the house she’d grown up in, after all... I had a feeling her father would batter the door down once he realized she was there, though.

Leen had gone back home to Mismede, though obviously she wasn't visiting her parents. Paula had accompanied her, of course.

I hoped that the girls enjoyed the last week of their single lives along with their families. Though honestly, it bothered me a bit. Once everyone left... the place felt all too quiet. Loneliness started creeping in around breakfast time.

Takeru and Moroha got up early to train, while Kousuke got up early to plow the fields. Karina went out in the early hours for her daily hunt, and neither Karen nor Suika had gotten out of bed. The gods in my immediate vicinity just did whatever they wanted, like always.

Sousuke was at the breakfast table... but he never spoke a word. He was playing Morning Mood by Edvard Grieg, but he didn't talk to me or anything. Frankly, I was just amazed by how well he could eat his breakfast while playing the violin. Out of all the gods, only Granny Tokie made sure to spend time with me every day. Most days she just sat outside on the balcony, knitting away at the fabric of reality. Though sometimes she got up to speak with the maids or take a walk into the castle town. She acted like everyone's grandmother at that point. It amazed me that she got along with everyone she met. I wondered if it was her divinity coming into play.

After I finished breakfast, I found myself getting a touch bored. I'd been given a break from my administrative duties. My vacation started one week before the wedding and ended right after the honeymoon, so I had nothing to do at all.

"Kohaku... I'm bored."

"Better bored than in trouble, no?"

She raised a fair point. I slumped down on the couch, lifted Kohaku up, and started petting her on the head. I kind of felt like an old man. The image of an old man sitting alongside his cat as the sunset flashed through my mind.

Frankly, it felt a little concerning. Surely I wasn't that old yet! I decided that the best course of action was to leave the castle and get some fresh air.

Holding Kohaku in my arms, I activated **[Teleport].** The two of us immediately found ourselves behind Brunhild's guild building. It was a very popular place that typically bustled with adventurers trying to prove their worth.

The adventurers hadn't quite noticed my sudden appearance, so I slipped on a hood and entered the building.

The place looked as lively as ever. Unlike Belfast and Regulus, there weren't many magical beasts in Brunhild's territory. And so, most of the adventurers visited to go dungeon diving on the islands Brunhild was connected to.

Unfortunately, just dungeon diving alone wasn't a great way of increasing one's rank. Completing quests and helping out the guild was the fastest way to climb upward. If you did enough, you could get up to the veteran blue rank in no time at all. Dungeon diving, on the other hand, wasn't really quest-related. It was just killing monsters and looking for loot. Since it wasn't a formal guild task, it didn't really help you rise up within their system.

The real incentive to go looting in the dungeons was the rare items and monsters you could find down there. If you brought back some good stuff, you could make some serious cash. Sure, you could take the 'collect X resources' quests from the guild, but then you'd be a bit limited in your search. You'd also suffer penalties if you failed the quest or didn't do it in time. That was why it was often considered better from a financial standpoint to just cut the guild out and sell the materials on the market yourself. And the guild itself had a counter for buying those materials, so they still won in the end.

Regardless, Brunhild's guild was more geared toward lower-ranked fortune-seekers than high-ranked quest-takers. It was a place for people who wanted an adventure without necessarily caring about their ranking.

Due to how busy it got, there were three separate reception desks in the building. I'd been here many times, so I headed to the desk I typically used.

"Welcome to the Brunhild branch of the adventurer's guild. How can I help—? Oh!"

Misha, the catwoman receptionist, formed a slightly awkward smile when she noticed Kohaku at my feet and realized who I was. It wasn't all that welcoming, for some reason.

"Sorry to bother you. Is Relisha in?"

"Oh, the guildmaster's upstairs. Please wait a moment. I'll check if she's

occupied.”

Misha suddenly stood up and shuffled up the stairs by the counter. I felt a bit bad. I should’ve just called ahead. After a short while, Misha came scampering back down.

“Thanks for waiting. Please go ahead.”

“Thanks... Sorry again for getting in your way.”

I bowed my head to Misha and continued up the stairs. After I got to the top, I made my way down the hallway on the second floor until I reached Relisha’s room.

“Good to see you, Your Highness.”

Relisha, the guildmaster, motioned for me to sit on the couch facing her. She was an elf, so she was a natural beauty... but something about her was seriously intimidating.

“Thanks for the invitation to your wedding, by the way. I’ll certainly be able to attend on behalf of the guild. Did you have any business here today, though?”

“Oh, well... Uhhh...”

I could only murmur a bit in response. It was hard for me to take up Relisha’s time, since I knew she always had a lot on her plate.

“Well, I was wondering about the academy. Have there been any issues?”

“Nope, all’s fine there. Most newbies take the two-week course, then pass their exams with no problems. The really promising newcomers get sorted into higher ranks come the end, so we’ve got a steady supply of people clearing the low and mid-level quests.”

“What about high-level quests? Who’s handling those?”

“Ende and Norn, along with Nia and her Red Cat friends. They’ve been handling strong dungeon monsters quite a lot lately.”

Huh... I had no idea they’d gotten so tough.

“Ende’s a silver-rank, so he’s getting by fine with the quests. Norn and Nia are red-rank as well.”

“Wait, what?! Ende’s at silver already?!”

“That’s right. He recently took care of a group of minotaurs that appeared near the dungeon entrance.”

I had no idea... I’d typically left dungeon affairs to the guild, so I hadn’t bothered checking up on individual rankings. Still, that was interesting. Given that Ende could fight Behemoths in his Dragoon, I had a feeling he’d rise to gold sooner or later.

Norn and Nia were at red-rank, too. That was probably good, to be honest. They’d be able to take care of issues that might have otherwise fallen to me.

I chatted with Relisha for a while longer before leaving the guild.

Hmm... Where to next?

I wandered around until I found myself at the school grounds.

Fiana and Sakura were back in Xenoahs, so I dropped in to see if they needed a hand anywhere.

When I got there, I saw something that I found a little hard to believe. The kids were playing in the yard, some on the slide and others in the jungle gym. But that wasn’t the issue. The sight I couldn’t quite process was the cheery, glasses-wearing girl and her purple Gollem companion who were entertaining the kids.

“Oh, Tou! Long time no see.”

“Beep.”

“What, uh...? What are you guys doing here?”

It was Luna Trieste and her Gollem, Viola. I’d already messed with her by using a curse, so she should’ve been free to live normally.

“Hm? I’m a teacher.”

“You’re a what?!”

Luna’s words made primal dread well up in me from the pits of my stomach. Her? A teacher?!

“Hm, are you okay? Did you come to see the children?”

How'd this happen?

I was so shocked that I immediately sought out the two teachers who'd been put in charge while Fiana was away. They were a human woman named Miette and an elf man named Leisale. Fiana had hired them to keep an eye on the kids and help her in class.

According to them, Luna had wandered over one day and started to play with the kids. Apparently, the kids took such a shine to her that they wanted her to help out in the classrooms, so Fiana ended up hiring her as an assistant. And from there, she eventually became a teacher in her own right.

I had heard from Kousaka that the school was hiring staff, since it was state-run and all... but I didn't realize it was her of all people.

"But why are you working here?"

"Kids are sweet, aren't they? They're so pure with their feelings. An adult might say thank you, but if a child thanks you, then it's always from the bottom of their hearts. Whenever one of these kids thanks me, I get a lovely tingle of joy shooting through me... Ehehe... Ehehehehe... It feels... so good... I might have finally found my life's calling."

Luna grinned madly, a look of pure ecstasy on her face. The curse I'd placed on her made her feel pleasure whenever she was appreciated, but apparently she'd learned to exploit that system for a hit of the good stuff whenever she felt like it...

"Are you sure she's a good fit for this job? Isn't she a bad influence?"

"Ahaha... She's a little quirky, but she seems to have a good work ethic. Plus, Viola helps a lot with heavy lifting," Leisale, the elf, smiled softly as he spoke. Luna probably knew that if the gratitude wasn't genuine, she wouldn't get her hit of pleasure, so at the very least she was working hard.

"Ms. Lunaaaaaa... Let's play!"

"Hey, Viowa... Let's pway. Ms. Luna, c'mon..."

"Let's make a sandcastle, yay!"

The kids started toddling over, surrounding Luna and Viola in seconds. They

really seemed to like her... I guess they were oblivious to her perversions.

“Okay, kids! Let’s build the bestest sandcastle ever!”

“Yay! Thanks, Ms. Luna!”

“Thank you!”

“Mfh!” Luna turned away from the children, hiding her pleasure-stricken face. She looked disgusting, frankly... Well, at least she had the good sense not to show the kids.

“A-Ah... A-Anyway! Let’s get to the sandbox!”

“Yeah! You too, Viola!”

“Beep.”

The kids dragged Luna and Viola over to the sandbox... Luna was practically bow-legged as she walked. I wasn’t sure how to feel about the whole situation.

“We always teach the kids to say thanks. It’s an important life lesson.”

“...Yeah, I guess... Though I wonder if that’s a good thing in her case...”

I personally felt like thank you, sorry, and I love you were the three most difficult phrases to get right in terms of timing. If you put off saying any of those things, then you wouldn’t get far in life.

I had a feeling teaching the kids to be open with their gratitude was a good thing, but Luna deriving so much pleasure from it was also a little... weird.

Either way, so long as Luna stayed true to her need for pleasure, I was sure she’d do a fine job teaching the kids. I couldn’t believe she was the same frenzied mistress that was feared throughout the Reverse World. For better or worse, she was a reformed person now... probably.

Looks like they don’t need much help here. Better head somewhere else.

It was about time for lunch, so I decided to head to the Silver Moon. I hadn’t been there in a while. When I got there, the dining room was packed, which wasn’t a surprise. The food was as delicious as it was cheap.

“My liege, one of our knights is over there.”

“Hm?”

Kohaku made me glance over at a nearby table, and I saw Lanz eating there. It made sense, given his feelings for Micah. He wasn’t wearing armor, so he was probably off-duty. The seat opposite him was empty, so I decided to take it.

“Mm? Ah... Y-Your High—”

“Shh! Don’t mind me, I just came here for some food.”

Lanz almost gave my identity away, but I managed to stop him in time.

“Welcome! How might I take your ord— Ah?”

“Shh!”

Micah appeared, and I had to stop her from exclaiming as well. I was a little surprised by her sudden appearance. I’d have expected her to be back in the kitchen.

“I’m on waitress duty because Dad’s helping me out. He’s been staying here in preparation for the wedding, so I’m having him work in the kitchen to pay his keep.”

“You’re charging your dad?”

“Of course! Business is business. Even if he’s my dad, he’s a customer first.”

...Damn. Sure, he gets a free stay, but is it really free if he has to work for it? I feel bad for the guy.

“It’s not just Dad, either. There’s a small group from Reflet working for their keep. Barral and Simon are among them.”

There’s still a week until the wedding. Are their stores back in Reflet gonna be okay if they leave them unattended for that long?

“So, what do you want?”

“Oh, I’ll just have today’s special. Same for Kohaku.”

“Gotcha.”

Micah set down a jug of water before walking back to the kitchen. I gulped down the water, keeping a close eye on Lanz as he watched Micah walking

away.

“...Still haven’t told her how you feel, huh?”

“Wh-Wh-What?! Huh?!”

Lanz froze up, then started shoveling food into his mouth. It was pretty funny to see him get so flustered. Lestian men were pretty earnest and pure-hearted... Well, not that perverted former king, really. But most of them.

“It’s pretty easy to tell, man. Why not just confess already?”

“Well, Ms. Karen told me to go about it properly...”

That made sense, but he still needed to act. The issue was that he didn’t know her very well. It was one thing to just sit in the inn at lunch, but he needed to make an effort with her. Though I couldn’t really talk, since I wasn’t all that assertive myself.

“I’m sure her father, Dolan, knows about my feelings... Sometimes I can feel him glaring at me...”

Leave him alone, old man... Wait, hold on... In war, if you want to take out the general... it’s best to target the horse he’s riding.

“Lanz, do you play shogi?”

“Ah, yes. I often play it with the other knights in our quarters. It’s quite good for tactical training! Why do you ask?”

“We’re going to take out the horse.”

“...What?”

A grin formed on my face as my plan started coming together.

Lunch had passed, and the dining hall was now sparsely populated. Lanz and I remained at our table, playing shogi together.

After a couple of games, I realized that he was quite a talented player. In fact, he was clearly beyond my skill level. It got to the point where I had to start cheating.

《My liege... Move that piece...》

《Got it...》

Kohaku telepathically communicated instructions to me. She was looking at a shogi tips app on my phone, which I could glance at through our shared vision.

That app was actually how Lanz had gotten so good, apparently. He played against the AI a lot.

“Hmm...” Lanz, who didn’t know I was cheating, pondered his next move. The app was pretty high-level, so I knew it’d be enough to stump him.

I glanced over to the kitchen and noticed that Dolan was watching us. Like a moth to a flame, he gradually made his way to the side of the table and began to spectate.

All according to plan.

“That’s check!”

“...Damn, you got me...”

Lanz managed to win despite my cheating. He was pretty damn impressive, all things considered.

“Hmph... You got better all of a sudden, Your Highness...”

“Oh, uh... I was just testing you at first, that’s all. Going easy on you as a warm-up!”

Lanz almost caught me, but I managed to talk him out of the situation. Honestly, I wasn’t very good at shogi, but I was trying to lure a certain old man out, so that was fine.

“You’re pretty good, Lanz. Quite the up-and-comer for our knight order. Hey, Dolan. Wanna play him?”

“Huh? What?!”

Lanz looked to his side, noticed Dolan was there, and suddenly stiffened up in shock. He must have been so focused on the game that he’d failed to register his surroundings.

“Interestin’... Been a while since I’ve seen someone who can play like that. You good to spend some time playin’ me, lad?”

“Oh, uh... Y-Yes sir! It’s my day off!”

“Alrighty then. Let’s go a round or two.”

I gave up my seat to Dolan, and Kohaku came out from under the table with my phone in her mouth.

Micah was in the middle of wiping down some tables, so I walked over to her.

“...Dad’s indulging in his habits again, huh? I’d appreciate it if you didn’t tempt him like that, you know?”

“He’s just having a little fun. By the way, Micah... what do you think of Lanz?”

“Huh? He’s a pretty nice guy. Helpful and stuff. He’s lugged a few boxes for me before.”

Damn... She really has no idea, huh?

“Oh yeah... There was a rowdy adventurer in here the other day who had a little much to drink, but Lanz took care of him. That was pretty cool, to be honest...”

Ohoho? I wonder if there’s a hint of feeling in there after all...

“Lanz is a pretty good guy, you know? I’d say he’s real boyfriend material.”

“Ahaha... Don’t be silly. I’m sure he could do better than someone like me.”

“I think he’d disagree with that. In fact, I think he might like you...”

“Huh?”

Micah suddenly went completely stiff, but hopefully what I’d said made her realize the situation at hand.

She stood still for a few more moments, then suddenly turned beet red.

Wh-What kind of spell was that?! You’re red as a rose! What are you, a chameleon?! Hello?! Earth to Micah!

“Wh-Wh-What?! H-He couldn’t... Me?!”

“...Did you not notice at all? Haven’t you wondered why he’s always here for you?”

“Well... he did ask me to dinner and give me a bouquet of flowers once, but...

that was as friends, right?”

“Men typically don’t give bouquets to girls they just regard as friends.”

“R-Really?!”

...Wow. She’s a total idiot, huh? Did she really not pick up on his signals? This would’ve been one of the situations where Karen showing up might’ve actually helped. Damn... these guys are utterly ridiculous. Lanz should have just confessed to her directly, really. Oh well, whatever. I’m sure it’ll all work out fine for them now that she knows...

“Micah. Order for table three.”

“Huh?! O-Oh, okay! G-Got it!”

One of the waitresses called over to Micah, who immediately disappeared into the kitchen. Even her ears were red...

I guess every small thing Lanz had done for her suddenly hit her all at once. Love comes at you like a lightning bolt... It certainly did for me, at least.

“Let’s head home now, Kohaku.”

“Very well.”

We still had a while before the girls got home. I was slowly getting used to doing things without them around, but it still felt pretty lonely overall... Still, I knew I’d be with them forever once we were married, so enjoying the feeling of solitude for the last time felt good in that regard.

Smiling to myself, I left the inn and began wandering back home.

◇ ◇ ◇

“M-Milord, thank you so much for inviting me to your wedding! It’s a blessing, truly! An honor!”

“Uhh... I-It’s fine. Please stand up...”

I was in the castle’s reception room, standing before a prostrating man. I awkwardly glanced toward the woman by his side.

“Please forgive him. He’s not very good at composing himself around nobility. I assure you he’s an upstanding man otherwise.”

“Right...”

The woman laughed softly at my response. The prostrating man was Joseph, and the woman was his wife, Lana. They were Elze and Linze’s uncle and aunt. They’d showed up because the immediate family members of the wedding party had been brought to Brunhild castle for the eve of the wedding.

It wasn’t just the aunt and uncle, either. Their children had arrived as well. In order of age, there was Emma (21), Aaron (16), Sheena (10), Allen (7), Kurara (6), Kirara (6), Allan (5), and Reno (3).

“Wowie! The room’s so big!”

“The rug’s all soft!”

“This chair’s all bouncy!”

“Settle down, children!” Emma, the eldest, was doing her best to keep the kids settled, but they were still rowdy as ever. I, for one, didn’t appreciate little Reno’s boogers being wiped on my coat.

“Aunt Lana... Will Joseph be okay? There’ll be nobles and royals at the wedding... It’s okay if he doesn’t come to the ceremony, we’ll understand.”

“Yeah, that’s right... We’re just happy he came here to the castle, you know? It’s okay.”

Elze and Linze expressed concern for their uncle. I was a little worried about him too. If he was this nervous around me, of all people, there was no telling how badly he’d freak out with the nobles from other lands.

However, Joseph turned to his nieces and spoke firmly.

“Don’t be ridiculous! I’d never be able to face my sister in the afterlife if I couldn’t walk her girls down the aisle! Even if I die, I’ll attend as a zombie! I mean it!”

I didn’t exactly want any zombies at my wedding, but I could appreciate his determination. He desperately wanted to be there for the girls on their big day.

“Can’t you help him, Touya?”

“I mean, I could, but...”

Technically, I could erase his trauma with **[Hypnosis],** but I didn't feel comfortable messing with his mind like that. Still, on the off-chance it was okay, I explained the spell to Lana and asked for her opinion. I didn't want to freak Joseph out too hard, so I didn't bother asking him. After hearing me out, Lana consented, which made me decide to give it a try.

"Okay, let's try it..."

I stood in front of Joseph, focusing my magical energies. A thin, black mist began swirling around him.

"Tempt, o Dark! Implanted Falsehood: [Hypnosis]."

"Whuh?" Joseph let out a quiet sound before falling into a trance.

"You're okay, Joseph. You can handle talking to nobles. You might have a little bit of anxiety, but it's completely fine. You'll be able to hold up a courteous conversation with them. There's not a thing to worry about. You're completely fine."

"I'm... completely fine..."

I had to be careful with my phrasing, since I didn't want him to be disrespectfully casual with the nobles. Hopefully that was still enough.

"Is it over?"

"Yeah. I think he'll be fine now."

Elze clapped her hands, which made Joseph blink. Gradually, he returned to his senses.

"Uncle... Do you know who the man in front of you is?"

"Huh? Of course! He's Mochizuki Touya, the grand duke of Brunhild. Don't be ridiculous, Elze... I wanted to thank him for his invitation..."

He seemed to be a bit more comfortable, if not a little twitchy. Brainwashing him was clearly the moral thing to do.

"So you're fine now... What a relief..."

Joseph looked confused at Elze's words, but I had a feeling he'd get over it.

"Thanks, Touya. Now he can attend the wedding without any issues."

“Heh, no worries. I’m just glad it worked out well. Anyway, let’s get you all to your rooms. Elze and Linze’ll show you the way.”

Joseph and his family followed Elze and Linze. The kids seemed amazed by just about everything they saw as they walked through the halls.

Hmm... Kind of crazy that they have so many kids... You’re a braver man than I, Joseph... But I guess I’ll have a family like that someday too, huh?

I’d seen the future thanks to Babylon, and because of that, I knew I’d have nine children. That was more kids than Joseph and Lana.

“I wonder if I’ll be a good father...”

“Oh, Touya-dono. I was looking for you, I was.”

After Joseph’s family left, Yae arrived with her own family in tow. Her father, Jubei, was there along with her mother, Nanae. Her brother Jutaro and his fiancee Ayane were with them as well. They were staying in the castle, so Yae had decided to take them all on a trip around town. Due to that, I hadn’t expected them to be back so soon. For some reason, Jutaro seemed to be livelier than usual.

“He challenged Moroha again, he did. And me...”

“Yeah... Didn’t think I’d lose, either.”

That explained it... Yae must’ve beaten him in a duel, so he was in a good mood due to how good of a fight it was. It made sense, really. Yae had been training with Moroha almost every day. She was far beyond regular humans. Given that he’d taught his sister how to fight, it must have taken him by surprise.

“Have you fought Yae recently, Jubei?”

“No, watching Jutaro’s fight against her was enough. Maybe I’d have given it a try if I were twenty years younger, but I’m sure she’d wipe the floor with me now.”

Hmm... I wonder about that... Jutaro’s certainly come a long way too, to be fair.

“Touya-dono!”

“Uh... Y-Yes?!”

Jutaro suddenly prostrated himself in front of me. I had an immediate and visceral flashback to Joseph’s earlier display.

“If I might be so bold, I ask that you give me time to travel alone in your nation! There are many swordsmen here that I’m certain I could learn from!”

“Huh?!”

I was shocked by Jutaro’s sudden request. Apparently, he was unable to get Moroha’s swordplay out of his mind.

“Um, so... what, you want to join my knight order?”

“Not at all! I only raise my blade in service of Tokugawa Ieyahsu-sama! What I am asking for is special permission to train with your knights here for a time!”

He looked up at me with raw sincerity painted over his face. I wasn’t really sure what to think.

I had a feeling that Moroha would be completely fine with it, but he was technically a foreign dignitary under Tokugawa. I could tell his intentions were earnest, though. And so, I sighed softly before giving him a nod.

“Fine. I’ll allow it, but I want to ask Ieyahsu for permission first. Assuming he says yes, I’ll prepare quarters for you and Ayane to live in.”

“Th-Thank you so much!”

“Yes, thank you!”

Jutaro bowed even more deeply, and Ayane joined him by bowing her head. I really didn’t see the point in the bowing... They were going to be my siblings-in-law, so it was only natural I’d treat them well.

“Touya-dono, I truly appreciate this.”

Yae smiled gently. She clearly loved her elder brother a lot, so I was sure the decision had brought her a lot of peace of mind. But if Jutaro and Ayane moved here, I had a feeling Jubei and Nanae would get lonely... I didn’t exactly want to open up **[Gate]** portals for them all the time, so I’d probably have to install a portal mirror connected to their dojo or something.

I shrugged, then carried on with my affairs until nightfall.

In the evening, we all ate together, played games, and then returned to our respective rooms.

It was my last night as a bachelor, alone in my massive bed.

“Tomorrow’s the day... I really can’t believe I’m getting hitched. I’ll be a married man this time tomorrow... To nine people, at that.”

I certainly had a lot of brides... but I loved every one of them, that much was for sure. I wanted to make them happy.

I’d met a lot of people since I’d come to this world, but meeting those girls ended up being the most important encounters of my life. If dying meant meeting them, then I was glad I had died.

“Lots of stuff has happened since I came here, huh...?”

In a way, dying was the best thing to happen to my life. A little morbid, but that didn’t make it any less true.

Well, time to get under the covers and go to sleep. Big day ahead of me and all...

I closed my eyes to get some rest, but for some reason, I couldn’t sleep at all.

I checked my smartphone. It was ten at night. I had to be up at five in the morning to prepare for the ceremony, but I just couldn’t bring myself to sleep at all. I was probably nervous.

“Damn it...”

I hopped out of bed and glanced at the corner of the room. Kohaku and the other summoned beasts were nestled up comfortably, dozing away. Lucky them.

I wondered if I should just bite the bullet and cast **[Sleep Cloud]** on myself, but I knew if I did, I’d run the risk of casting it too hard... I definitely didn’t want to sleep through my wedding day. That would’ve been an absolute disaster.

At times like that, there was only one thing to do... browse the internet on my phone until I fell unconscious with a website open.

I planned on going to Earth for my honeymoon anyway, so checking up on Earth news seemed useful.

“Hm... I wonder if we should go to other countries instead of just staying in Japan...”

I couldn’t open up **[Gate]** to places I hadn’t been before... Technically. The magic actually worked based on mental images, so I just needed to look up a place online to reach it.

The internet was filled with all kinds of photos of exotic locations. The pyramids of Egypt, Waikiki Beach in Hawaii, Uluru in Australia... The possibilities were endless. Plus, I could use translation magic to make communication quick and easy.

...Wait. Can I? There’s no magic in Earth’s atmosphere, right? Oh, wait. I think I can use residual magic through my divinity... And if not, I can just teleport using my divinity, can’t I?

Though, if that was the case, Leen and Linze would be able to use a little magic back on Earth. I didn’t exactly want that to happen...

Earth was a world where magic didn’t exist, so suddenly unleashing it on the planet would cause everything to go sideways for sure.

Despite my incessant browsing, I wasn’t getting any sleepier. The anxiety grew way too intense.

“...I’ll treat myself to a cup of tea.”

I headed to the balcony and took in the evening breeze. The full moon sat overhead, illuminating the night sky.

The usual hustle and bustle had died down due to how late it was, and only a few flickering lights from the castle town provided evidence of human life in the area.

Suddenly, I felt a presence.

“Having trouble sleeping?”

“...Well, I guess you could say that. I think it’s the nerves.”

I didn’t even have to turn around to know who it was. He was sitting at the balcony table, a small cup of tea in front of him.



I was a recipient of God Almighty's own divinity, so I could sense him whenever he came down to this world. Thus, his arrival hadn't shocked me. It was different when Karen just popped up, though. I could never see her coming.

"Here, my boy. This divine tea should help ease you into slumber."

"Oh, thanks."

I sat down across from him and took the tea. The stalk in the middle of the liquid was standing on end, which was a sign of good luck. The first time I'd met God Almighty, the stalk had stood on end as well.

"Tomorrow is the big day, my lad. I am quite nervous, I must admit. It will be the first time I have attended a ceremony quite like this one."

"Ahaha... It'll be nice to have you, though."

I was glad he could attend. Without him, I had a feeling Karen or Suika would go too far in their revelry.

"I know now, my boy. It was the right decision to send you to this world. The problems that had been bubbling here have just about been quelled. All it took was a little push from another world."

His words were comforting to hear, and more than encouraging.

"Touya, my boy... Have you come to like this world?"

"I have, yeah. This world and its inhabitants are all important to me."

"I see... That is rather pleasant to hear. As the god of worlds, I manage a great many realms. Some worlds are more difficult to handle than others, but that comes with the territory. Before I sent you here, this world was lacking in any definitive features. The other gods certainly had no interest in it, and as shameful as it is to admit, I had been neglecting it. It was rather boring."

Speak for yourself, man. This world's been anything but boring to me. The one I came from didn't have any of the magic or wild stuff like this place.

"Thanks to your hard work, this world is becoming noticeable again. The gods are flocking to it, even. That may cause you some difficulties in the future, so I

will apologize in advance for that...”

I was the custodian of the world, so I didn’t have a huge issue with gods visiting in human form... Well, as long as they stayed out of trouble, anyway.

“I shall have the newcomers greet you before the ceremony tomorrow. I assure you they will cause no trouble for you or your brides-to-be.”

“I appreciate that.”

I definitely didn’t want any divine pranksters ruining my big day.

“Now then, I think it is time for bed, wouldn’t you agree? You have a big day ahead of you, my lad.”

“Yeah, you’re right...”

The tea had certainly worked wonders. I could feel my eyelids starting to come down. I stifled a yawn before saying goodnight.

“Take care, my boy. See you in the morning.”

God Almighty smiled, then vanished into thin air. A wave of exhaustion suddenly washed over me, so I ran to my bedroom as fast as possible.

Once I’d scrambled into bed, the black void of sleep consumed me. With one long, final blink, my last night as a single man came to an end.

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Several booms rang out as heavy guns fired their blanks skyward, signifying the beginning of a very important day. Almost immediately after that, the crowd looked to the clear blue above them.

Brunhild’s castle town bustled with far more people than usual. It was their grand duke’s wedding day, so people had come from near and far to attend the event. Even though it was still early in the day, merchants were opening their stalls and attending to their customers.

A parade had been planned, but the newcomers to Brunhild were far more interested in the enormous metal soldiers at the town’s large gates.

Those who had never been to Brunhild before were surely amazed by the massive Frame Gears. They stood in static poses, holding their weapons high.

Nobody was allowed to climb on them, and guards were posted to ensure there was no vandalism. Anyone who wanted a closer look at them had to buy capsule toy versions of the machines from Olba Strand's store.

The capsule dispensers were guarded too, of course. They had attracted children and adults alike, and suddenly created a whole crowd of people who wanted to take a stab at the lottery. In many ways, it was no different from similar things on Earth. Some people wanted to collect entire sets, as well as those who were content with just one. Regardless, they were proving to be quite the hot commodity.

Outsiders enjoyed the interesting and unique cultural products that Brunhild had to offer, while local residents enjoyed the heightened hustle and bustle.

Eventually, the town's clock tower rang out, signaling the start of midday. And in response, the lined-up Frame Gears crossed their spears, signifying that the time had come at last.

The wedding was about to begin.

Interlude: His Friend

Touya had died in an accident.

He was struck by lightning, apparently. It didn't make any damn sense...

He'd been my buddy since junior high, and he'd always been a little bit weird. It wasn't like he didn't know the kind of guy I was, but he came up to me in class one day without a care in the world.

Everyone else treated me like a pain in the ass, but he was different. Even though I was a delinquent... even though I'd been kicked out of class multiple times, he just sauntered on over one day and asked to borrow a hundred yen.

Honestly, I thought he was a real dumbass at first. But then we actually got to talking, and that was that. He even helped me one time when I got into a fight with some guys from another school.

I was surrounded by five guys, about to get my ass kicked... when Touya showed up on his scooter and got me out of there.

The guy didn't even have a license. Apparently, his grandpa taught him how to ride, and he'd conveniently borrowed the scooter to come get me. Luckily, he never got caught, but the guy was crazy enough to pull something like that.

After that, we started hanging out more, and I made more friends along the way. Thanks to him, my junior high life turned out okay.

Touya was kind and punctual with his friends, but he was ruthless to a fault with his enemies. Sometimes I had to calm him down a little, since he had a habit of getting really pissed. I was just glad I never got on his bad side, since he could be really scary.

Though, maybe he was right all along... He always said it was better to do things instead of never doing them and wondering what could have happened. Maybe I could've stood to be more like him.

But he died, even with that mindset. We went to different high schools, but we planned to meet up again. Unfortunately, that never happened.

I attended his funeral and helped out at his wake. I figured I at least owed his

parents that much. They'd always treated me well, after all.

A little while after the funeral, I started having strange dreams. This old guy... I think he might have been god or something, appeared out of nowhere to show me the weirdest things.

All the dreams revolved around Touya. In one dream, he was wearing a weird outfit and swinging a katana around. He was fighting monsters like the ones in my video games.

The dreams were a little weird, honestly... Still, it was nice seeing Touya alive and well... even if it was just in my imagination.

In another dream, he saved some girl who kind of had a classic samurai vibe to her. That one was funny, since it felt so absurd.

Then, there was another dream where he got engaged to a princess. But she was like... twelve or something? It was a little weird that I dreamed about my dead buddy being into little girls, honestly...

I kept on having dreams like that, over and over. It almost felt like they weren't just dreams, like maybe Touya really was alive in some other place I sometimes caught glimpses of.

On New Year's Day, I was looking through the cards I'd gotten from my friends... and it kind of hit me like a truck that I wouldn't get any of his shoddily-made cards ever again.

He could play the piano and stuff, but he wasn't much of an artist. I think his dad was pretty great in that department, though, so the talent must have skipped a generation.

He used to like my sketches, to be honest. Not to brag, but I'd always had a bit of a knack for drawing.

I used to draw just as a hobby, but then an idea formed in my mind when I saw Touya's dad's work lined up on a bookshelf. It might have been a dumb idea in hindsight, but it was something I didn't want to regret.

I went to Touya's house and rang the doorbell.

"Hey. Teach me to draw."

“Uh... I dunno about that, kid. I’m hardly a master, you know?”

Touya’s dad seemed a little bewildered by my sudden arrival. He had bags under his eyes. And I wasn’t exactly sure if that was because it was early in the morning or not.

“Why do you want to draw?”

“...I want to write a story. One with, uh... Touya... as the main character.”

I told Touya’s dad about the dreams I’d been having. He nodded along slowly as I spoke. And eventually, he gave me a small, gentle smile.

“...Those dreams sound quite funny. I’d certainly like to hear the full story, personally. I suppose I could take on an assistant in my work... The pay’s not great, but do you wanna give it a shot?”

“I’m in!”

I didn’t know if I could become a professional manga artist like Touya’s dad, but I was determined to draw Touya’s story. If my friend really was alive, somehow, in some other place... then I wanted to keep the memory of him alive in our world as well.

I’ll do you proud, Touya.

◇ ◇ ◇

I had another dream. But it was one about my junior high years this time... Back then, I regularly hung out with Touya.

“Hey, Touya... You’re taking it a bit far, man...”

“Think so? Well, maybe he shouldn’t have pissed me off... Guess it was a bit much, though.”

“...Yeah, I’d say so.”

I glanced at the long-haired blonde man, who was naked on the ground. I couldn’t help but feel sorry for him.

He was the leader of a motorcycle gang in the area, and apparently, he’d been stalking a woman. His advances were getting really scary, from what I’d heard. The girl had a boyfriend, and he went to confront the stalker as soon as

he heard about what was going on. He was a pretty damn brave guy. But obviously, those bikers didn't just listen to him. They beat the crap out of him and sent him to the hospital.

That boyfriend was one of our classmates. We went to visit him in the hospital, and his girlfriend was there. She kept crying and blaming herself.

Touya managed to get the girl to explain the situation. Then, he left and started making some calls on his phone.

"Hey, Mr. X? It's been a while. I'm Touya, Mochizuki's grandson. Yeah, that's right. I had a favor I wanted to ask..."

"Hey, Mr. Y? I need a few men taken care of. Yeah. I don't mean to bother you, but I feel like my grandpa would've gotten a kick out of it."

"Yeah. There's a local gang leader. Need help dealing with his cronies, you know? No, no... You don't need to bring a carpet and duct tape. This situation demands a little more tact."

I remember being a little unnerved by the snippets of conversation I'd overheard.

After that, events started unfolding even more quickly. Touya found out where the gang leader was, slowly separated him from his goons, and caught him in a one-on-one situation. Well, technically, it was two-on-one, since I was there too.

Touya turned around and told me to keep out of it, so I just watched from the sidelines as he goaded the furious guy into a total fit. We didn't even have to lay a single hand on him. The guy just flew into a rage and ended up charging forward.

He had a steel pipe and a switchblade, so Touya technically acted in self-defense, but still...

After beating him unconscious, he stripped off the guy's clothes and took a few pictures of him.

"Okay... Sent."

"Who'd you send that to?"

“His gang’s second-in-command. Apparently, they don’t get along well, so giving him some blackmail material should solve this little problem for us.”

“Wow...”

Touya laughed so casually despite the extreme subject matter. It was a little scary. He didn’t look like a bad guy, but there was clearly something terrifying lurking inside him. Still, he dealt with his problems in a pretty smart way, for the most part.

A while later, we found out that the gang leader got usurped and chased out of town. Naturally, the stalking stopped as well, but nobody ever found out it was Touya’s doing.

“I don’t need any credit. I just did it because I wanted to do it, and that’s all there is to it.”

“You didn’t even hesitate, man.”

“Only because I didn’t want to regret hesitating. My grandpa always said that you’ve got to be prepared to do anything.”

The look on Touya’s face made me think he really would do anything... Maybe even killing someone wasn’t unreasonable in his eyes. I vowed then and there to never get on his bad side.

“...He really was something else.”

“Yeah... That sure sounds like Touya. He really was influenced by his grandpa. I don’t know how my wife managed to turn out so normal with that guy raising her...”

Touya’s dad let out a soft sigh as he set down his pen. I wondered if calling him “boss” seemed better, given my new job with him.

“Things were a little tense back when my father-in-law died, honestly...”

I wanted to ask for more details, but I decided to keep my mouth shut. Instead, I looked at the tall stack of papers on the desk.

“I spent a good deal of Touya’s youth working hard on my projects, and my wife has a lot of work too... so I guess he was raised in part by his grandpa. I think they went to a lot of strange and interesting places together.”

Touya’s parents both worked from home, but they were often very busy with that work. Apparently, his grandpa had stepped in to help look after him.

“What kind of guy was he? Touya’s grandpa, I mean.”

“Hmm... He was a pretty interesting man. He had friends all over, from ones in show business to politics to the criminal underworld... We even have a baby photo of Touya being hugged by a former prime minister.”

“Wow...”

“The stories about him are pretty wild, too. Apparently he wrestled a bear, saw an alien, and took out a mafia organization.”

“Wait, seriously?!”

“Well, they’re probably at least a little bit embellished.”

Touya’s dad laughed softly, but I found myself quietly taken aback. If that was the guy responsible for Touya being the way he was, then those stories could have easily been true...

“Well, enough small talk. Let’s carry on with our work. I’m done with the penciling, so I’d like you to start filling in the lines.”

“Guh... I hope we make it in time for the deadline.”

I took another half-finished page from my boss. The end was near, at the very least. And so, I rolled up my sleeves, ready to give it my all.

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“Wh-What do you think?”

“Hmm... Let’s see...”

I got a little anxious as I presented my rough draft of the story to my boss.

“It’s too long-winded. I think you should cut out the stuff unrelated to the main plot if you plan to actually pitch this. This panel isn’t necessary, and these two can be combined. Personally, I think the story would be more exciting if the protagonist was less passive, too.”

He looked ready to continue his criticism, but then paused and looked up at the ceiling.

“Though, I guess Touya isn’t really a proactive person, is he?”

“Exactly.”

My story framed Touya as the main character, so I wanted to keep it true to the kind of person he was. His advice made perfect sense for a wholly original character, however.

The story was one I planned to write as a hobby. I also wanted to pen another manga as my actual professional work. Naturally, my boss would be overseeing that one as well.

In the modern age, there were plenty of ways to publish your work. You could make self-published content in print form or just post stuff online.

I wanted to draw Touya’s story simply because it was something I wanted to share with the world.

“But still, this is interesting... It almost feels real, you know? Maybe it’s because you knew him so well, but these things really feel like actions Touya would take.”

“Heh... Yeah, it does feel like him, doesn’t it?”

We laughed together a little bit. This story was just something I’d written based on my dreams, so I couldn’t say for sure if it was entirely my doing.

...Although they were my dreams, so it had all clearly sprung from me.

“Do you still have those dreams, by the way?”

“Yeah, once in a while. Not every single day, though.”

I had dreams about Touya once every couple of weeks. Oddly enough, I could remember them fully, so I started writing them down the moment I woke up. It was almost like watching a TV show.

“The other day, I dreamed about him beating a Black Dragon and heading to another country.”

“Hoho. Dragon-slaying, huh? That’s a pretty interesting turn of events. I wonder if he’s going through some kind of hero’s journey.”

Once I went over those details, I started asking about my other story. I

wanted him to look over it, since I was planning on submitting it for a monthly magazine contest.

“Huh...? Wait, it’s not a fantasy story?”

“Yeah. I guess I got influenced by Touya...”

Instead of a tale in a fantasy setting, I’d drawn a regular school manga for the contest.

I’d managed to write Touya’s story easily enough because it was just the things I’d seen in my dreams, but it was a lot more challenging to come up with my own original manga. That was why I was looking forward to hearing what the boss had to say about it. An even mixture of fear and excitement swirled within my chest.

“S-So... how is it?”

“Hmm... Well, it’s pretty good overall, but maybe in this scene you should...”

I focused on his advice as my eyes glanced over my manuscript. I knew Touya was working hard in the world of my dreams, so I resolved to work hard as well.

Chapter II: The Royal Wedding

“I-I look a little awkward in this, don’t I?”

“You are the picture of regality, my liege.”

“Quite. You look rather attractive.”

“You’re the very image of handsssomeness, sssweetie.”

I was a little embarrassed by Kohaku, Sango, and Kokuyou’s complimentary words. At the moment, I was standing in front of a mirror, modeling my white tuxedo.

It felt strange, in all honesty. There was a white rose boutonniere at the top of my jacket collar. I didn’t exactly think the ensemble looked great on me, but this was a once-in-a-lifetime event, so I opted to grin and bear it.

“Man... I’m really tense about all this...”

“Heh. So even you get anxious, huh?”

“O-Of course I do! This is a major life event for me!”

I pouted slightly at Luli’s casual commentary.

Ugh... M-Maybe we can just call off the ceremony and send out a postcard that has “We got married! Don’t worry about it!” on it...? That’d solve all of this.

...Nah, I can’t do that. I’m the monarch of an entire nation, so that’d cause a scandal. Plus, I need to let the girls have their big day, I know how much they’ve been looking forward to this.

I couldn’t run away, nor could I ask anyone else to run away with me.

Most weddings in this world were lavish parties involving the families of the wedding party, and they didn’t necessarily make vows in a religious sense or anything. I did hear that some weddings involved making vows before spirits, though.

Personally, I didn’t mind making vows before a god, but the one I believed in was also the same one that the Ramissh Theocracy worshiped. I couldn’t

publicly make any vows that were pointed in that direction, since that would raise political questions about Ramissh's relationship with Brunhild.

That was why I'd instead planned to summon the Pillar Spirits and vow before them as a witness instead. Though, considering the fact that I was the Celestial Spirit King, it felt a little weird, since they were my subordinates...

Well, whatever. It's probably best not to think about it too deeply.

Someone knocked on my door, and the individual let themselves in. It was Laim, my butler.

"Your Highness, Master Shinnosuke is here to see you."

"Oh, sure. Let him in."

Laim nodded, and God Almighty walked into my room. Behind him were a few other people. Presumably, they were the newer gods who had descended for my wedding. God Almighty was wearing a kimono with a hakama skirt. Given his usual attire, it suited him very well indeed. The Mochizuki family crest adorned his clothing, taking the form of a Navagraha symbol. Given that he was my grandfather in this world, it made sense he'd be wearing the family emblem.

After Laim bowed and excused himself from the room, God Almighty shot a grin in my direction.

"Ohoho. You look rather charming. I barely recognize you, my boy."

"I can't say I feel fully comfortable in this..."

Frankly, I wondered how he usually saw me, but it was nice to receive a little praise.

"Now, let me introduce the newcomers to you... From right to left... This is the goddess of dance, the god of strength, the god of industry, the god of glasses, the god of theater, the god of puppetry, the god of wandering, the goddess of flowers, and the goddess of gemstones. They will be attending the wedding as family friends."

"Nice to meet you all. I'm Mochizuki Touya. I hope you enjoy your stay."

I'd received notice about the gods that were coming, but a lot of these guys seemed pretty weird in general. What the hell was the point of having a god of

glasses? Sure, he wore eyeglasses, but like... what exactly were the scope of his powers?

They were all dressed in formal attire, which was a relief. However, it looked like the god of strength's bulging muscles were about to ripple and burst out of his suit.

The goddess of dance, goddess of flowers, goddess of gemstones, and Grandma Tokie were all women, but the rest were male... Though, the god of theater seemed kind of androgynous. He almost reminded me of Kokuyou, in fact.

He was handsome and seemed like the type who'd be popular with women, but he also had a kind of feminine twang to his voice. I decided not to be rude and ask him about that. It wasn't any of my business, after all.

"Once the wedding ends, they will tour the world at their own discretion. Fret not, though. I have told them to try not to engage in anything reckless."

Personally, I'd have preferred to forbid it instead of asking politely... However, I had heard that gods weren't allowed to come down to the mortal realm unless they had a good deal of knowledge on how to conduct themselves, so ideally, everything would work out okay.

"Now then, we do not wish to overstay our welcome. We will be on our way. Best of luck, my lad."

"Oh, yeah. Thank you."

The other gods bowed their heads and took their leave. None of them really stood out other than the strength god or the theater god, though.

I was a little anxious about having close to twenty gods in my wedding party, but stranger things had happened.

I sighed softly as Kougyoku came flying through the nearby window.

"Welcome back. What's the situation?"

"From what I've seen, your guests are gathering with little in the way of incident."

I had Kougyoku scout out the ceremonial area. We'd chosen to have a garden

wedding, and had partially renovated the courtyard to that end. The reason for that was simple enough, really. Our castle's audience hall didn't have the space to accommodate the sheer amount of guests.

Cesca, the terminal gynoid in charge of Babylon's garden, had been working tirelessly to turn our courtyard into the perfect wedding venue. Our gardener Julio had also been working hard to cultivate the right aesthetic. By the end of it all, our ordinary yard had transformed into a gorgeous paradise with plenty of flowers.

I was honestly surprised that the perverted maid could do something so amazing. Even if it made sense due to her being in charge of Babylon's garden, she hadn't inspired much confidence in me through her conduct. Honestly, the smug grin on her face still pissed me off... but she'd definitely done enough to earn my praise.

All the Babylon gynoids came down to attend the wedding as well. Naturally, Doctor Babylon, Elluka, and Fenrir were also in attendance.

Shirogane and the three maid Gollems (Ruby, Saph, and Emerl) had come from Drakliff Island. They were all working under Laim's instruction.

We were a little short on general service staff, so we had members of our knight order work as butlers and maids. Naturally, they'd get bonuses for their hard work. The three kunoichi working under Tsubaki were also maids for the day.

A knock suddenly came at the door. It was Laim again.

"It's time, Your Highness."

"...Yeah. I guess it is."

I started to hype myself up by slapping my cheeks a couple of times for motivation. Then, I started to panic because I didn't want to go out with red marks on my face, since that would've started a bunch of rumors.

I took a deep breath, in and out. Once I calmed myself down, I followed Laim.

A-Am I walking right? A-Am I gonna be okay?!

"My liege... You're swinging your right leg and your right arm out quite rigidly

at the same time.”

“Ah...” I paused slightly at Kohaku’s words. I hadn’t even noticed my own nervous conduct, which wasn’t a good sign.

“I’m more worried than I thought...”

“Fret not, sir. The king of Belfast was so nervous before his wedding that he kept drinking water right before the ceremony began.”

“Really?”

“Indeed. He was so desperate to use the bathroom throughout the ceremony that he can’t even remember the celebratory speeches that were given.”

I was more amused that Laim remembered those details, but given he once worked in service of Belfast that seemed reasonable. Plus, it was honestly a little reassuring to know that I wasn’t the only monarch in the world to have pre-wedding jitters.

“The king of Belfast used to tell this story to others quite openly. He said that too much tension and stress would never bear good results. The way to proceed is with relaxed shoulders and an easy-going gait.”

Easy-going, huh...? I guess my main fear here is how different I’m acting. Maybe I should just take it easy and be more authentically me. Yeah... That sounds good.

“Are you alright now?”

“Yeah. Sorry for making you worry.”

“There’s no need to apologize. In fact, I should be thanking you for indulging an old man’s chatter,” Laim said that, smiled, and continued onwards. I certainly felt a bit better. Things were probably going to be okay... Probably, at least...

Eventually, we reached the door to the venue-decked courtyard. Nikola and Norue, sub-commanders of the knight order, stood on either side of the door. They weren’t dressed in their usual armor. Instead, they wore formal attire that was much more suitable for the occasion.

Beyond the door, I could hear music starting up, playing through Babylon’s

speakers. We didn't have a personal orchestra, so this was our best alternative.

The music was, of course, Mendelssohn's classic Wedding March. Some people preferred Wagner's Bridal Chorus, but I wasn't among them. The trumpet fanfare really set the mood, and the rhythmic sounds set my heart at ease.

Plus, Wagner's composition was originally from a tragic opera named "Lohengrin." Mendelssohn's was based on Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which was considerably lighter in tone... Not that it was completely free of turmoil, mind you.

Either way, I wanted my wedding to be a story that ended happily.

Right when the fanfare peaked, Nikola and Norue opened up the great door before me. The guests were all lined up along the aisle, cheering and clapping. Royal weddings were traditionally quiet and somber affairs in this world, but we decided that we wanted to break that tradition and make it fun for all our attendees.

I showed the girls a video of a girl walking down the aisle, and they all said they wanted to do that. Apparently, there was also a similar practice in this world. The practice involved the groom walking with his mother, and the bride walking with her father. It was similar to the method I knew, but also a little different.

As I walked out with Kohaku and the other summons, a sudden rain of dancing cherry blossoms began falling down. It continued as I made my way toward the altar, which was modest, but adorned with many beautiful flowers. Cesca had decked it out with the most beautiful ones she'd ever cultivated.

I stopped by the side of the small staircase that led up to the altar. That was the spot where I'd await my brides.

Eventually, the door opened, revealing three individuals. Two women, one man. The man, who stood in the middle, was Joseph. Completely free of his traumatic fear, he beamed broadly as he walked arm-in-arm with his nieces, Elze and Linze.

"Ooh! Look!"

“Goodness, they’re beautiful!”

Our guests murmured in awe as the girls continued their march.

I’d seen their dresses before, but I hadn’t seen them wearing them. They were in a princess line style, gently blooming outward from the waistline to the hem.

Despite their contrasting personalities, they both looked equally beautiful. I remembered the day I’d met them in Reflet just like yesterday... At the time, I’d have never expected to marry them.

Elze had a harsh, go-getter personality... but she was secretly quite gentle and kind. She had a habit of keeping her anxieties bottled up inside, but she was always there for others. That was why I wanted to be there to support her.

Linze, on the other hand, seemed quite meek at a glance. However, she was actually one of the strongest people I knew. Her heart was a wellspring of kindness, and she was dedicated to a fault. She never ceased to amaze me with the things she did, so I wanted to see how far she could go.

Joseph walked slowly, taking care not to step on their dresses. He looked a little nervous, but he was leaps and bounds beyond his earlier lack of composure. Elze and Linze looked quite nervous as well, but their veils blocked a clear view of their expressions.

They gradually made their way toward the altar. And once they reached me, Joseph bowed his head.

“Please treat them with care.”

“I’ll make them happy, I promise.”

I bowed my head back to Joseph, who was probably too nervous to fully look me in the eye, before I took Elze’s hand and led her up to the altar.

In much the same fashion, I led Linze by the hand before taking my position back at the base of the stairs.

Joseph moved to his seat, and the doors opened once more. This time it was Yae and her father, Jubei. They proceeded down the aisle as Elze and Linze did.

Yae was wearing a wedding dress, which almost seemed strange given her

Japan-esque heritage. Her father, however, was wearing a hakama. That kind of balanced the image out.

The order in which the girls appeared matched the order in which I'd met them. After I met Elze and Linze, I'd encountered Yae on one of my outings. Back then, I was amazed by her swordplay, since she dispatched a bunch of bad guys with ease.

She seemed like a bit of a blockhead at times, but she was truly skilled and earnest. Family was never far from her mind, and her soft heart had helped me through tough times. Yae's smile could soothe everyone in the vicinity.

As Yae appeared before me, I took her hand. Her father looked me dead in the eye.

"My daughter is in your care, now."

"Thank you. I promise to look after her."

Jubei bowed, and I led Yae up to the altar to stand with the other two girls.

Next through the door was Sue, along with Duke Ortlinde.

It wasn't long after I met Yae that I met Sue. If I hadn't met her, then I'd have never met Yumina... And I definitely wouldn't have become a world leader in that case.

When I met Sue, she was definitely childlike, but she had a more mature charm to her now. She was the youngest of the group, around twelve or so... Though, she was nearly thirteen. I couldn't help but think that was a little young, but I didn't want to postpone the wedding or exclude her from the ceremony. That was why I was happy to see her in front of me.

She was extremely energetic and excitable, always getting into trouble. And she could be a little self-centered sometimes, but that mischievous side of her had a certain charm to it.

I took Sue's hand and led her toward the altar steps.

"That girl worries me plenty, so... please take good care of her."

"I will, don't worry. I know how to keep her from acting out."

Duke Ortlinde smiled at me, then bowed his head. Sue pouted as if to chastise her father's worries, then scampered up the steps on her own.

The door opened once more, and my fifth bride-to-be appeared. It was Yumina. Her father, King Belfast, stood by her side.

Yumina was the boldest of all my fiancees, and she ended up placing herself by my side before I even knew it. I was happy to accept her feelings, in the end, because I couldn't imagine life without her.

Sometimes, it felt like I was just dancing in the palm of her hand, but I thought that side of her was charming and interesting as well.

The two of them walked down the aisle before stopping in front of me.

"Touya, lad... Please look after my daughter."

"I will."

I nodded at King Belfast as I took Yumina's hand. She slowly walked up to the altar.

Leen came next. Her parents had already moved on from this world, so the beastking of Mismede had stepped in to walk with her. Paula was also seated as one of her guests.

Even in her wedding dress, she looked cheeky as ever. She was a lot older than me, but she had a childish sense of mischief to her that often shone through. Really, her age was just a number.

Without her urging me, I'd have never tried to pursue Babylon's legacy. I'd have never gotten my hands on the Frame Gears, and the Phrase invasion might have devastated the world... In a way, my meeting with Leen might have saved the entire planet.

I took the beautiful savior's hand, then flashed her a smile.

"Y'best treat my court mage well, Touya."

"You can count on it. I won't ever stop."

The beastking grinned broadly, then turned around to take his seat.

Leen headed up to the altar, and the door opened once more. Lu walked

through this time, with the emperor of Regulus by her side.

The emperor, who was once on his deathbed, looked like the picture of health. Last I heard, he planned to abdicate and leave the imperial throne to Lu's brother.

I remembered meeting Lu during the Regulus coup. I was glad I made it... If I'd been any later, terrible things would've happened there.

Lu managed to develop her cooking skills, and I knew just how hard she'd been working to pursue her dreams. She was the kind of person who focused on a goal and never stopped until she reached it. And honestly, I wanted to follow her example.

The emperor gently bowed his head to me.

"Please keep my daughter safe."

"I promise I will."

I led Lu up to the altar, then waited for the door to open again. When it did, I couldn't help but chuckle.

Sakura appeared, her veil concealing the look of disgust she had directed toward her openly weeping father. I knew she'd have preferred her mother, Fiana, but the Overlord had gotten down on his knees and begged to walk her down the aisle, so she reluctantly agreed.

Sakura walked rather briskly down the aisle as if to get it over with quickly. Those two really had a long way to go with their relationship.

I remembered my first meeting with Sakura. She was on the verge of death thanks to assassins from Yulong. Terrible things would've happened to her if not for the Babylon tech I had at my disposal...

Sakura was usually quiet and not all that emotional, but her singing voice conveyed all manner of feelings. I wanted to continue to nurture that talent of hers, and thereby help her bring joy to even more people.

Once Sakura made it to the steps, she took my hand and quickly proceeded to the altar.

Just as I was letting out a small chuckle, the overlord grabbed me by the

shoulders.

“M-Make my daughter happy or I’ll never forgive you! Ever!”

“I-I’ll do my best.”

Auuugh! Get your face away from me! You’re gonna get snot and tears all over my tux!

The overlord scampered away to his seat, which didn’t exactly inspire confidence. I was somewhat worried about how he’d act as my father-in-law, to be honest.

I almost got lost in thought when Hilde strode through the doors with her father, the former king of Lestia.

Hilde was the seventh of the girls who got engaged to me, but she was the last of them in terms of meeting order.

She usually had a chivalrous, knightly air to her. But today, her dainty and feminine features took center stage. She wielded a bouquet of flowers instead of a sword, and a gorgeous dress adorned her body instead of shining armor.

I respected how sincere and responsible she was. Though, there was also a side of her that tended to overdo things. Even so, that was something that made her unique, and it made me want to support her.

“May good fortune bless the union between you and my daughter.”

“Thank you.”

I took Hilde’s hand from the former knight king and showed her up to the altar. We’d all gathered at last.

I bowed to her father, and he found his seat. Then, I headed up the steps to the altar. The Wedding March, which had been playing on a loop, finally came to an end.

“In the name of the Celestial Spirit King, come forth...” I whispered quietly in order to summon the Pillar Spirits to the altar. I wanted to keep it down, since there were a few people in the audience who understood the language of the spirits.

A pillar of fire erupted into the air above the altar. Next came a rushing wall of water, and then a whirling gust. A clump of sand and stone rose from the ground, followed by an orb of light, and then a clump of shadowy darkness.

“Wow...”

“Amazing... I-Is this really happening?!”

The crowd roared in excitement as the elements danced through the air before suddenly vanishing. In their place, six clearly inhuman girls floated above the altar.

They were the six pillar spirits of fire, water, wind, earth, light, and darkness.

“Ooh!”

“S-Spirits! They’re really here!”

The sight of the spirits whipped the crowd into a frenzy.

Spirits were considered more tangible objects of worship than gods. And so, they were largely considered more sacred than abstract deities. The people of the Sea of Trees region even worshiped a great tree spirit.

Some people held fast to the belief that spirits were servants of higher powers that had created the world. I knew that to actually be true, since God Almighty had confirmed it to me.

“We, the Pillar Spirits, do hereby declare the union between the Grand Duke of Brunhild and his nine brides a blessed one,” the Spirit of Light spoke in a soft, calming voice.

As if by magic, the uproarious crowd suddenly fell into stunned silence. And I wasn’t surprised. It wasn’t common for spirits to appear for weddings, much less ones of this status. Plus, only a few people in the crowd could understand their language. With the exception of the gods in the audience, I had a feeling everyone had been brought to a state of utter shock and awe.

Luckily, nobody but me seemed to have noticed how nervous the pillar spirits were. It was only natural, though. The gods themselves were in the audience, and they were blessing the wedding of their king. I felt a little sorry for them, since they were clearly under a lot of pressure.

Either way, they were doing a great job.

“W-Well then... May you share in joy and sorrow... and step forward to a life of love,” the Fire Spirit spoke with just a teeny bit of tension in her voice. She was holding it together pretty well.

“Now, allow us to grant you a marriage gift.”

Nine rings appeared on the altar once the Earth Spirit said that. Each of them emitted a gentle platinum glow.

The wedding rings were specially crafted by God Almighty, and they were infused with my divinity. As such, they could be considered sacred treasures of the highest possible tier.

The rings worked like receivers, allowing the wearers to use my divinity more directly. Basically, they were magical items that elevated a person to the same divine rank as a servile god, which was an utterly absurd boost in power. They did not affect me, though. And they also wouldn’t affect anyone other than the girls.

One at a time, I took each ring in hand and slid them along the ring fingers of my brides. Once they all had one on, a small glow rose up from each of them and began floating toward my hand.

When the glow subsided, a ring similar to theirs appeared on my left ring finger. I knew just by glancing that it was a unique ring blessed by the gods, the spirits, and the girls I’d come to love so much.

The youngest of the Pillar Spirits, the Spirit of Darkness, suddenly began to speak.

“These rings are a mark of your bond, as well as proof of this ceremonial blessing. In the name of the Celestial Spirit King, your union is formally recognized.”

I felt a little amused that they’d blessed me in the name of the Celestial Spirit King, given that I was him, but I decided not to sweat the small stuff.

Smaller spirits began appearing in the air all over the courtyard, mesmerizing the guests with their dances. There were spirits colored red, blue, green,

purple, yellow, and all other kinds. They streaked through the air, leaving beautiful trails in their wake.

The Pillar Spirits transformed into their elemental forms once more, soaring into the air with the others. They then clashed with each other, creating vibrant fireworks that shot high into the air above.

The guests rose to give them a standing ovation in response to the incredible sight. The spirits had really outdone themselves. I needed to thank them later.

With the Pillar Spirits as our witness, our wedding had been properly officiated.

I'd live out the rest of my life with these girls. We were now bound by holy matrimony, and we'd be together forever.

The clock tower rang, but it wasn't doing so to tell the time. Its bell tolled to celebrate our love. It heralded good fortune and warded away evil.

Petals fell from above, seemingly in response to the bell. I wondered if that was the work of the goddess of flowers, but it was more likely the work of the Flower Spirit I'd summoned. As the petals continued dancing in the wind, I moved my hands forward and lifted Elze's wedding veil.

"You look beautiful, Elze."

"Geez... You look pretty good yourself. You better keep being the same brave man throughout our marriage. Don't make me kick your ass."

Elze sure could be scary when she wanted to. We laughed, then moved to seal the ceremony with a kiss. The two of us were pretty shy, though... so we just kissed each other on the cheek.

I had a feeling that life would be just a little bit easier with Elze leading the charge. I'd be right by her side, though. I didn't want to be left behind.

I knew that with Elze by my side, I never had to fear anything in my path. She was my courage and bravery in human form.

I turned to Linze and gently raised her wedding veil.

"You're beautiful, Linze."

“Hehehe... I’ll give you all my power, Touya... I’m here for you.”

Linze’s expression was a full-blown teary-eyed smile. I kissed her cheek as if to wipe away those tears. She reciprocated in kind, placing her soft lips against my skin.

Linze was the kind of girl who supported me from the side. And so, I wanted to be a husband capable of supporting her right back. She was sincere, always wanted to help others, and she probably had the strongest motherly instinct out of all of my brides... Maybe it was a little too soon to think about parenthood, though.

I moved opposite Yae and lifted her veil. She greeted me with a smile and began to speak.

“I want to be with you for the rest of my life, I do.”

“Thanks, Yae. I feel the same.”

I honestly wondered how long we’d actually live. Given that the girls had divinity on par with servile gods, we’d probably be able to spend a rather long time together.

Her words felt intense, but it was definitely a crystallization of her true feelings. I felt exactly the same way. I wanted to walk through the rest of my life with these girls.

Yae and I exchanged cheek kisses before I turned toward Sue.

“You’re always getting into trouble, Touya. I wanna be with you through more and more danger!”

“Hahaha... I’m sure you will be.”

Due to the height difference, I bent down to kiss Sue’s cheek. She grabbed me by the collar and pulled me further down. I really couldn’t help but laugh at how boisterous she was.

Sue’s naive nature acted as a shining beacon in a lot of tough situations. No matter how gloomy things got, she always had an optimistic outlook. Her curiosity sometimes got her into trouble, but I knew she had a pure heart.

The next bride to have her veil raised was Yumina. I was honestly surprised to

see that she had tears in her eyes. She looked right at me with the gentlest of expressions on her face.

“I’m so happy... It was my dream to get married to you... and now it’s really happening. I love you so much, Touya.”

“I feel the same, Yumina. I love you.”

Out of all my brides, she was the one who wanted this marriage the most. As a princess, she could’ve easily been married away for political reasons, so this marriage of love was likely an incredible relief to her. That said, I didn’t think her father would’ve ever used her in that way... Though, he could’ve always had his hand forced by the nobility.

Either way, Yumina forged her own path forward, which brought her to my side. I’d always respected her strength of will.

Yumina and I exchanged cheek kisses before I moved to Leen.

“I must say, I honestly never expected to experience something like this.”

“Well, you better get used to it. We’ll be living together forever.”

Leen and I laughed softly as we exchanged our kisses. Leen had many friends over the course of her life, but it’d been a long while since she’d had anyone to call family. Maybe it was those feelings of needing someone that resulted in her creating Paula.

But now she had me, as well as all the others. I vowed to never let her feel lonely again.

I moved to Lu, lifted her veil, and kissed her on the cheek. She kissed me right back, trying to make it as tender as she could.

“I’m in charge of our family meals going forward, okay?”

“Haha... Just don’t serve me too much. I’ll be keeping an eye on my waistline.”

Lu’s expression was one of pure joy. She was an incredible cook, but frankly, I worried about eating too much of her food. I wondered if my divine body was even capable of packing on that much weight... but I was pretty sure I’d seen one or two fat gods before, so I didn’t want to take any chances.

There was that stereotype of people putting on weight once they were happy and married, but that didn't mean it had to happen! It'd probably be a good idea to include more daily exercise into my routine, at any rate.

As I internalized those thoughts, I stepped in front of Sakura.

"Grand Duke... I'm a little hungry..."

"...Just hold on a little longer, okay?"

Even on her wedding day, Sakura marched to the beat of her own drum. I liked that about her, though. She wasn't a person who talked much, but I felt comfortable just being around her. The way she did things her way, much like with her singing, was a very relaxing and calming aspect of life with her.

Once I lifted her veil, we exchanged kisses on the cheek. As one would expect, she didn't show much emotion. Though, I did notice her cheeks flushing a pale shade of pink.

Before I knew it, I'd made it in front of Hilde. She was the last of the lot. Usually, she had a formal, dignified look about her, but the sight of her in a dress brought out a latent cuteness.

"Touya... I hope we live a long and happy life together."

"Same here."

Her words were succinct and straight to the point, but that was just how she was. I wanted to make sure that her hopes were fulfilled.

I lifted Hilde's veil and kissed her on the cheek. She moved a little stiffly as she kissed me back, but she managed it without a hitch.

The bell tolled once more. I was officially a married man. Perhaps the luckiest one in the world, even.



I turned to address the crowd behind me... and activated **[Speaker].**

“Thank you all for being here today. I’m sure many of you had busy schedules. I hope you’ll all watch with anticipation as I build Brunhild into a prosperous nation. And I want you to support me as I build my marriage into a truly happy one. We’ll be taking our first steps into a new life together, and I know for a fact that I’m going to do everything I can to make these women happy. Thank you again.”

The crowd stood up to applaud, petals still dancing through the air. The girls and I all bowed our bodies forward in appreciation. And at that exact moment, perhaps due to Kougyoku’s intervention, a flock of white doves flew overhead. We watched them flutter into the distance as the bells continued to toll.

“Okay, everyone! Listen up! Where Touya and I come from, there’s a tradition called the bouquet toss! The brides each throw back a bouquet! If you catch it, you should present it to the person you love. There’s a good chance you’ll find everlasting happiness with that person, you know? Just to be clear, though, this is an event for single men only! Now’s your chance, bachelors! If there’s anyone you wanna woo, get ready to catch a bouquet!” Karen, who had appeared out of nowhere and spoke through the **[Speaker]** I’d set up, made a stampede of men charge toward the altar.

I paused for a moment upon hearing her. What she had described definitely wasn’t the bouquet toss I was familiar with.

All the girls lined up on the stage seemed a bit confused too, but that was probably because they hadn’t been informed in advance. Just as I was about to head back to the stage and ask what was going on, Moroha stopped me.

“Your world’s bouquet tossing is too intimidating for young women. Karen says it’s better this way.”

I saw her point. I remembered reading articles that said a lot of women didn’t like participating in the bouquet toss. The reasons varied. Some women didn’t want to be seen as desperate, while others felt obligated or pressured.

It would generally be less embarrassing for a guy. I’d heard about a tradition with guys, but I thought that one involved broccoli rather than flowers... Either

way, there were nine bouquets in all, so there'd be a lot of chances for love to bloom.

Plus, flower bouquets were better than broccoli ones. That much was obvious.

Bachelors of all ages gathered in front of the altar. Even Dolan was there! I mean, sure, he was technically a bachelor, since he was a widower, but should he really have been thinking about love when he had Micah and his inn?

I noticed Lanz standing awkwardly beside him. It didn't take a genius to tell he was thinking of Micah.

Wait... should our knights be participating in this?

"Don't worry about security. Mr. Mittens and his cat squad secured the area a while ago," Moroha chuckled softly as she said that. They were rather special cats, but letting them handle the security detail for the entire wedding was a bit much...

I glanced into the crowd and saw that many of the bachelors were people I recognized.

One of the boys there was Will, a knight of Brunhild. He'd been in the Rabbi Desert with Logan and Rebecca. I had a feeling he'd probably be giving his bouquet to Wendy.

I recognized one of Mismede's military captains, Garm. Rengetsu the Eashenese monk was also in the crowd. There were the rookie adventurers, Lop and Klaus... And even the boy-king of Palouf! I narrowed my eyes and saw the pumpkin-pants prince himself, Robert. And Ende joined in as well. More and more foreign knights and nobles kept pushing their way into the crowd. Sure, we had nine bouquets, but wasn't the number of people a little high?!

"Social status means nothing here, you know? If you catch it, you win it! No stealing allowed, got it? If you steal away someone's happiness, you may find unhappiness following after you!" Karen spoke sternly and clearly, hammering the point home.

The men spread out in front of the altar, taking care not to get completely lost in the crowd. They glanced up at the girls, but also kept their wits about them,

ensuring that their enemies couldn't get an upper hand. The wedding crowd at large looked upon the men with anticipation and curiosity. I wouldn't be surprised if this spectacle turned bouquet tossing into a regular tradition.

"Alright, girls, turn around! On my mark, toss your bouquets backward with all the force you can muster!"

All nine brides turned around on Karen's command. And suddenly, a drumroll started playing out of nowhere. I turned around and saw the culprit, the god of music.

"Okay, girls! One, two... and throw!"

In the blink of an eye, nine bouquets sailed through the air. Some flew higher, some lower. One shot up almost completely vertically, courtesy of Sue.

"That's mine!" Garm, the wolf beastman, roared as he sprang forward at full pelt. He was going for a low-flying bouquet, which was probably the smartest move. He reached out and was seconds away from grasping his target... when Ende appeared and swiped it away. Ouch.

"Woohoo! I got one!" Ende said as he stuck a perfect landing, merrily holding his prize in the air. I thought it was a bit of a waste, though. He and Melle were already in love with each other! Poor Garm...

"Yay!"

"Damn it!"

"Aw yeah!"

"Typical..."

A cacophony of depressed voices, mixed with a light swirl of happy voices, rose into the air.

Some of the people I knew had managed to swipe bouquets, including the young king of Palouf. I was amazed he'd managed it, given how short he was.

《A few men accidentally dropped it, and he managed to catch it before it hit the ground.》 Kohaku explained what had happened through a telepathic message.

《Oh, that makes sense.》

The boy-king's fiancee, Rachael, was jumping up and down in joy.

I was pleased to see that Lanz had gotten his hands on one. His line of sight suddenly met with Micah's... and the two of them went beet red, causing them to start looking at the floor. Neither of them had noticed Dolan standing behind them, giving them a peculiar glare. Incidentally, Dolan had actually obtained a bouquet as well.

Will had managed to obtain one. Wendy, who'd come alongside him, looked positively delighted. I scanned the crowd for more winners and noticed that the pumpkin-pants prince had gotten his hands on a bouquet somehow.

I couldn't help but feel like too many men in situations of mutual love won the bouquets... It made me feel a little bit sorry for the single guys, honestly.

"C'mon, Touya. Even in committed relationships, acts of romance like this are never a bad idea."

"Hehehehe... You're pretty good at this, Karen, hic! Even if it's, hic, rigged! Bouquet tosses are nice, riiight?"

Karina and Suika had apparently been reading my mind.

Wait... rigged?

I glanced at Karen, who flashed me a coy wink.

I knew it! You used some kind of power to influence the results, didn't you? Well, whatever... I'll just pretend I have no idea what just happened. That's generally the best thing to do when it comes to these people.

◇ ◇ ◇

After the bouquet toss, my brides and I paraded around the castle town in a large walking Gollem I'd built in the workshop. It was a fairly small town, though... so maybe it was a little too big.

It was kind of like a multi-legged double-decker bus. The needlessly flashy invention was the result of a collaborative effort between Doctor Babylon and Elluka. Rosetta was driving it.

The Gollem bus slowly made its way around the town on a circuit loop back toward the castle.

It was basically a modified Ether Vehicle, like the kinds that littered the hangar. It had an open-air upper deck, so we could sit up top and wave to the people. Honestly, it felt like a victory parade that sports teams had after winning a major tournament.

We waved out at the crowd of people huddled in the streets, and they waved back. I recognized a lot of the faces out there, but many tourists and travelers had clearly just come for the festivities. And there were a couple of adventurers, too.

“Hm?”

I suddenly spotted something suspicious in the crowd. A man had moved behind a cheering tourist and subtly slipped his hand into his pocket. There was a thief out there!

Just as I was about to use **[Paralyze]** on him with my Smartphone, the would-be thief fell to the ground. I was confused, but then I spotted Mr. Mittens with his rapier at the ready. To be clear, the man was unharmed. I’d enchanted the blunt rapier with **[Paralyze]** a short while ago for easy apprehension.

Mr. Mittens shot me a thumbs-up and a wink. I was a little bit disturbed by the sight, since I’d never noticed his opposable thumbs before.

The more people in an area, the higher the chance of crime... Luckily, Mr. Mittens’ Cat Sith squad was adept at weeding out suspicious individuals. In a way, those annoying little cats made for the world’s finest town guards.

I gave Mr. Mittens a nod of thanks. I planned to send him some catnip-infused wine later on as a show of appreciation.

The Gollem bus finished its cycle around town and started heading back to the castle. This particular machine had wheels on the side that could swap out with the legs at any time. It was in wheel mode during the parade segment, even. I originally protested the idea of having legs in the first place if wheels were an option, but I was convinced to let the legs stay when I was told that they would help when navigating the out-of-town terrain.

When we returned to the castle, we immediately headed to the dressing room to change our clothes. We still had the reception to attend. The courtyard, the castle's great hall, and the game room had all been connected by a **[Gate]** door. And all our guests were given freedom of movement between the three locations. The wedding reception was more of an after-party, so it was free of the formal obligations that had come with the ceremony itself.

Once we arrived in the dressing room, Laim appeared with a fresh set of clothes. I took off my white tux and started putting on my next outfit.

My new outfit was a grey vest over a plain white shirt, with dark grey pants and a suit jacket. I also wore a navy tie just to bring it all together. It was a much less gaudy look than the ceremonial attire.

Even though it was a wedding reception, there was no candlelight service or cake-cutting or anything like that. It was just a party to entertain guests and unwind for the evening.

I asked Laim to fix my crooked tie, then left the room. By the time we made it back, all of our wedding guests had begun looking around the game room or enjoying the food.

There wasn't any need to hurry, but I didn't want to leave people waiting. I knew it'd take a while for the girls to finish getting changed, so I decided to go on ahead.

I got Kohaku and the other heavenly beasts together, then warped to the party hall with **[Teleport].**

The knights standing by at the door were surprised by my sudden appearance, but they let me in right away. I apologized for the shock before proceeding inside. The guests immediately took notice.

"There's the man of the hour!" the beastking roared out as an introduction, and the other attendees all started to clap.

The hall had several tables draped with white cloths, and a wide variety of food rested atop them. The guests were able to pick up a plate and pile up whatever dishes suited their fancy. In other words, it was a buffet.

Originally, I'd come up with a seating plan, but I realized that there were way

too many foreign dignitaries and nobles to match up, so instead of making a huge round table, I figured this was the better approach.

The buffet format encouraged socializing, which was a good thing given how many countries were in attendance.

“Congratulations on your wedding, Touya-dono,” Ieyahsu, who was swigging an entire bottle of Refreesian Wine, gave me a red-faced congratulations.

“Ah, thanks a bunch, Lord Ieyahsu. I hope you’re having fun.”

We had more people visiting us from Eashen than just Yae’s family. Ieyahsu, some of the Tokugawa retainers, and Shirahime were all here.

Ieyahsu wandered off, and Lefang Letra, the king of Egret appeared. His feathered headdress looked nice as ever. Upon closer inspection, the feathers were actually a lot more vibrant than they were the last time I’d seen him. I wondered if it was a special headdress for formal events.

“Hello there, Grand Duke. You’re a married man now! Make sure you treat your wives with care, eh?”

“I’ll be sure to, King Letra,” I replied as I bowed my head in gratitude.

He had seven wives, so his advice was especially useful to me. Speaking of Egret, I’d heard that the nation had begun mass fishing for Tentaculars since the last time I visited. Apparently, the food they made out of the creatures had become quite a popular export.

I had a feeling I’d see Egret’s dried Tentacular bits on the market if I checked.

“Congratulations on your marriage.”

“Indeed, congratulations.”

“Thank you. I hope to attend yours soon enough.”

The next two to congratulate me were Lupheus, prince of Triharan, and Berlietta, princess of Strain. They had gotten engaged after the big race, and they’d be married soon enough.

“I hope to see you there! We’ll be parading around in our latest ethermobile!”

“I’ve been arguing with Berli about optimization, though...”

“Tsk! I’ve been installing those new parts for a reason!”

“I get that, I just think we need to consider engine load!”

“Come now, you two.”

I didn’t want them to erupt into an argument, so I calmed them down. I was fine with them being the kind of couple who got along through competition with each other, but I wanted them to save their debates for a less crowded venue.

Just as I wondered what to do next, I suddenly heard exclamations of wonder from across the room. The large doors had opened up, and all nine of my brides appeared in wedding gowns.

Their outfits were similar to the dresses they’d worn earlier, but they were far more streamlined. They had a shorter skirt that went down to the knees, as well as lacy parts around the chest, shoulder, and arms.

These dresses emphasized cuteness over pure grace.

“Hey, go to ’em already!” Baba, former member of the Takeda Elite Four, patted me hard on the back as he said that. He and Kousaka laughed obnoxiously with each other. Apparently, they’d been hitting the sauce pretty hard, but they were doing a good job of chatting up foreign nationals all the same.

As I walked toward the girls, Sue came barreling forward and jumped up at me.

“Hey now... You think you should be doing that now that you’re my wife?”

“Huh? What do you mean? I’m your wife now, so that means I’ve gotta greet you like this! You better get used to it, Touya. It’s gonna be like this every single day!”

Ugh... I know... I’m just really shy about doing this in public.

Whether she was inspired by Sue’s actions or not, Yumina came up to greet me with a big hug. I had Yumina hanging on one arm... and Sue hanging on the other. That would’ve been bad enough, but I sensed a subtle pressure emanating from the other seven smiling faces in front of me.

I looked up and saw the king of Egret, who could only offer me a sympathetic, knowing nod. I tried to mouth for help, but it was too late...

Once everyone had calmed down, we went around as a group to speak with the guests. We spoke to the royals who were chatting in the courtyard, sampled all kinds of food at the buffet, and poked our heads into the game room where we talked up a few nobles.

By the time we finished all that, it was quite late in the evening. Guests who were leaving were sent off with a little catalog of goods for them to fill in and request stuff. Guests who were staying were shown to their quarters in the castle.

I spoke my last few words to the remaining guests before retiring from the party with my wives. The rest was up to Lapis and Kousaka. I wished them luck.

“Whew... I’m beat...”

I loosened my tie and slumped down on the couch. Everyone had gone back to their respective rooms. A wave of exhaustion washed over me, probably because the day was finally catching up with my body.

“Here you are, sir.”

“Oh, thanks...”

Laim brought me a glass of cold water, which I gulped down in a single go. I’d barely drank anything all day, since I was deathly scared of being trapped while needing to use the bathroom. In that moment, I was euphoric. The water tasted like the nectar of the gods.

Laim poured me another glass as soon as I emptied the first.

“It was a splendid wedding, Your Highness. I’m certain all your guests were pleased.”

“I hope that’s the case...”

Laim’s lavish praise made me chuckle a little as I brought the glass of water to my lips once more.

“Now that the wedding is over, all you need to do to protect your lineage is produce successors.”

“Pwwbrugh?!” I almost choked on my water when I heard him continue.

Successors?! It’s a little too soon to be thinking about that!

Laim saw my concern and simply shook his head.

“It is the duty of royalty to preserve their noble blood, Your Highness. The king of Belfast had only one wife, so I was quite concerned until Yumina came around. Thankfully, you have nine brides, so the chance of successful conception has increased ninefold. What a relief.”

“You don’t have to put it like that...”

I mean, I guess it’s gonna happen at some point... Love, marriage... The next step is pretty obvious.

I’d waited until I was eighteen before getting married, but the youngest of them was still twelve or so... Even in this world, people weren’t properly recognized as adults until they were around fourteen or fifteen, so I definitely wanted to wait a couple years before engaging in that kind of activity... However, it was customary to consummate the marriage shortly after the ceremony.

Even back home, the Sengoku Period commander, Maeda Toshiie, married his wife Matsu when he was twenty-one and she was twelve. That was the same age as Sue... and Matsu gave birth only a year after she got married.

That definitely didn’t mean I had to follow suit, though...

Still... apparently the order of that particular matter had already been decided amongst my wives. Without my input, of course.

Simply put, I’d be... ‘seeing’ my wives in the order we got engaged. In other words, it’d be Yumina, then Linze, Elze, Yae, Lu, Sue, Hilde, Leen, and Sakura.

In other words... I had to visit Yumina’s room tonight, Linze’s on the next night, and so on.

I felt an extreme sense of apprehension and fear, far different from the nerves I’d had before the wedding. I really should’ve prepared myself for this.

Even after Laim had left my room, I sat on my own, drinking water for a while. The ticking sound of the clock grew louder and louder as I did.

...You can't sit here forever, Touya. You have to do this!

My heart felt ready to burst out of my chest, but I stood up and made for the door. At that exact moment, I heard a knock.

"U-Uh?! Hello?!"

"It is I."

The door creaked open, revealing Cesca. She entered the room with a silver platter that had a few glasses and bottles on it. I wondered if she'd come to offer me a drink of wine, or something.

"Doctor Babylon wishes to offer you this to congratulate you on your wedding."

"Uh... what is this, exactly?"

The three bottles, which looked more like vials, glittered like precious gemstones as I held them up to the light. The liquids kind of resembled the flavoring syrup on shaved ice. Certainly appealing, but probably not healthy.

"The red drink enhances your stamina. The blue drink replenishes your libido. The green drink is a general pick-me-up that should keep you going."

"I don't want any of those!"

This is way too blunt a wedding gift!

"Flora engineered them in the alchemy lab specifically for you. There aren't any side effects, I assure you."

"I don't need anything like that. I can handle things myself."

*I have spells like **[Refresh]** to restore my stamina if it comes down to it... Um... n-not that I'm planning to keep going until I feel ready to faint or anything...*

Cesca suddenly shot her hand forward and placed her thumb against my wrist.

"Hm. Pulse is ordinary, but your blood pressure and respiration are a little lacking. You're tense."

"Well, duh!"

Anyone would be tense in a situation like this. I was even more nervous than I was when I faced the wicked god.

“There are all manner of things that can go wrong during one’s first time. I wouldn’t want you initiating a traumatic incident. I think you should do a test run with me before moving to the real consummation. Now, come. Hurry up now.”

“H-Hey!”

Cesca let out a rather crude grunt before shoving me down to the couch. She held me down with her brutish strength, then began violently unbuttoning my shirt.

“It won’t hurt. Just look at the ceiling. It’ll all be over soon.”

“Augh! **[T-Teleport]!** ”

“Boo...”

I warped myself off the couch before she could go any further.

Damn it, this isn’t right! I better get to Yumina as quickly as I can...

I started briskly walking down the hallway, fixing up my shirt all the while.

“How did it go?”

“He was dragging his heels, just as you’d predicted. Our master is certainly a hopeless man, Doctor.”

Cesca let out a small sigh as she leaned back against the couch. Doctor Babylon laughed back through the phone speaker.

“Well, he’s not all that bad. I’d rather him be like this than be overly confident or the kind of brute who only sees women as sexual objects. Still, he’ll have to get used to it... He has to get used to this eventually, after all.”

“Are you sure your body could take something like that, Doctor?”

The Babylon gynoids were artificial constructs, so their bodies wouldn’t grow any further. Babylon’s body would be that of a child’s for eternity.

“Mmm... I’m sure we can find a way around that. Perhaps the goddess of alcohol could provide him with some liquid incentive.”

“How very cunning.”

The goddess of alcohol looked even younger than Babylon, but she was still seen drinking like a sailor all around the town. The only issue of getting Touya drunk was that his divinity-infused body would be highly resistant to it. Unbeknownst to the boy, the two gynoids chuckled merrily, raising a toast to the path he’d embarked upon.

“[Prison].”

“Uhm... What is this?”

I activated **[Prison]** around Yumina’s room, much to her surprise. With that in place, nobody would be able to peek in on us or enter the room.

I didn’t exactly feel safe with that alone, though. Doctor Babylon could’ve easily violated our privacy with security cameras or other such measures. And so, I quickly ran a **[Search]** spell to check, but couldn’t find anything. Perhaps I was just overthinking it... Doctor Babylon may have been a horrible little creature, but she probably wasn’t that bad. I felt a little bad for suspecting her, but she had given me reasons to suspect her in the first place.

I let out a sigh of relief... and the pajama-clad Yumina suddenly cleared her throat from over on the bed in response.

“...Touya? Haven’t you been neglecting your new wife?”

“Oh... Sorry... I just got distracted.”

Shit... Don’t wanna sour the mood here...

I quickly composed myself and apologized. It seemed to lighten her mood a little.

Yumina sat upright on the bed and leaned her body forward. Before I knew it, she was bowing with her hands in front of her body.

Who’d you learn that from, Yae?!

“I’m inexperienced... but I hope we’ll grow together for the rest of our lives.”

“Y-Yeah... I feel the exact same way...”

I suddenly felt compelled to mirror Yumina’s actions. I crawled up onto the

bed and bowed my body toward hers. Then, I looked up and saw that she was gazing right into my eyes. All the pent-up tension in my body flew away upon taking in that sight.

I knew right then and there, with absolute certainty, that I would spend the rest of my life with these girls. No more hesitation tainted my heart.

I took Yumina's hand in mine, and we locked lips. The courage I lacked during the ceremony began surging within me.

Beneath the pale light of the moon, the shadowy forms of our bodies interlocked and overlapped in the first moment of true connection.

Suffice to say, I felt extremely sore the next nine days.

Chapter III: In Another World On My Honeymoon “That’s our Touya. Now he’s a married man in both name and deed, you know?”

“...Well, he didn’t exactly go all the way with Sue... since she’s not really physically ready for that. Still, I think he’s happy to take things slow with her now that they’re married and all.”

“Anyway, they’re going on that honeymoon now, right? I wonder what kind of things they’ll get up to...”

“Hey, Touya! Sake! Bring me, hic, a bottle of sake back! I don’t want any non-booze souvenirs!”

Karen, Moroha, Karina, and Suika were prattling on about whatever they wanted. Personally, I’d have appreciated it if they’d kept their gossip to themselves! I didn’t enjoy my marriage being the subject of rumors by my family members... Especially Moroha and Karen! They were my wives’ sisters-in-law, so they should’ve really watched what they said... Though honestly, it’d probably take something really bad for the girls to hate them. They were family now.

“I definitely can’t warp all the girls across to Earth on my own... God Almighty said he was gonna help me, so we’ve just gotta wait on him...”

The gossiping goddesses were sitting in the castle courtyard, eating some snacks at one of the wedding tables we’d yet to put away.

The main issue with going back home was the fact that I was dead there. Back there, it wasn’t exactly normal for the deceased to rise back up. As much as I’d have loved to be like, “Hey guys, I’m back!” I couldn’t do that. It violated the fundamental norms of the world I grew up in.

That was why I couldn’t visit as Mochizuki Touya the human. I needed to go as Mochizuki Touya, the god. Well, the apprentice god, at least.

Also, I was a little worried about how thin the mana in the atmosphere over there was. The girls wouldn’t be able to use their spells as freely.

I had divinity on my side, so I was safe, but they would be fairly limited in terms of power. That said, the divine traits they'd developed from their bond with me like Yumina's foresight ability would probably work just fine.

Yumina's mystic eye probably wouldn't work, however, since it was just a Null spell manifesting in her eyeball.

"I don't think you should worry that much, you know? Your phone's a sacred treasure, so you can use magic through it to some extent. Just don't use it too much, since it's not a normal thing in that world. If some shady organization got wind of it, you wouldn't get much time to enjoy your honeymoon, you know?"

I wouldn't want that to happen... Still, it'd be good to use it through my phone a little. I can use ***[Search]*** *if anyone gets lost, and* ***[Storage]*** *for souvenirs and stu*

"God Almighty sure is late, though. He said he'd be here around noon."

"That's just how it is, you know? The divine realm's been abuzz about the upcoming resort, so I'm sure he's really busy."

A group of gods had descended for my wedding in order to get a taste of life on this planet. There was the goddess of dance, the god of strength, the god of industry, the god of glasses, the god of theater, the god of puppetry, the god of wandering, the goddess of flowers, and the goddess of gemstones. Oh, and also Granny Tokie, but she was a more permanent visitor.

It'd been ten days since their descent, and that was more than enough time for stories to spread among the gods in the divine realm. The number of gods interested in coming down to this world had reached its peak.

"They might sound selfish, but anyone would jump at the chance to experience such a fascinating thing as a human life."

"...I don't exactly relate to the idea of a regular human life being fascinating, but hey... I guess that's their perspective."

"Wahahah, hic! It's like that thing... Uhhh... That thing from your world, hic! Roll pray! Right? That's, hic, it!"

...Roll pray? Does the drunken little gremlin mean roleplay? I guess it makes sense that they'd want to immerse themselves in something completely

different from their daily lives. Gods really aren't all that different from humans in the end, are they?

"I heard that the god of puppetry and the god of industry have already started creating their businesses, while the goddess of dance and the god of theater have joined a theatrical troupe. I have a feeling we'll be hearing about them before long," Karina spoke so casually, but that was a pretty short amount of time to do stuff like that... Even in human form, gods were still gods. I had a feeling they'd all end up becoming world-renowned professionals if they kept it up.

"I noticed that the god of glasses has been handing out a lot of glasses, you know? I wonder why that is..."

"Missionary work. Not a lot of people have glasses in this world, so he's trying to raise awareness. He also thinks everyone looks better in glasses. His philosophy is that anyone who looks bad in glasses just hasn't found the right pair yet."

...Well, that settles it. The god of glasses is a total weirdo. But so long as he keeps out of trouble, I'm not gonna complain about it. Hell, maybe he'll become an optician or something? Who knows.

"I just hope nobody causes any trouble while I'm away on my—"

Hm? That presence just now...

"Fret not. I shall keep a watchful eye on them."

I turned and saw that God Almighty had finally arrived. Because I directly benefited from his divinity, but he was the only god I could sense.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, my boy. I got caught up in a heated debate about the resort project."

"Makes sense."

I'm not gonna ask for details, since I'm sure it'll just make me worry.

"Now then... Touya, could you call everyone together? I would like to go over some guidelines before your trip."

"Oh, sure thing."

Guidelines, huh? I guess we'll need to be careful... I think Ende mentioned something about dangers while traveling through worlds too, though I think a trip to Earth should be simple enough.

I pulled out my smartphone and sent a group text to the girls.

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"Now then. Starting tomorrow, you will be visiting the planet Earth. It is the world where Touya once lived."

Everyone was gathered in the courtyard, listening to God Almighty speak. Fortunately, we still had enough chairs set out.

Karen and the other goddesses quietly watched us from a nearby table.

"The rings in your possession will automatically convert languages, so you need not worry about communication. This will also extend to written words. I shall also provide you with some funds for the trip."

Oh, cool. So I can understand foreigners? That's pretty convenient, but I guess it's the bare minimum you can expect from a sacred treasure.

I grinned slightly as I looked down at the wedding ring on my finger. I wasn't actually that worried about my own speech, since I was just planning on taking them to Japan, but it was still a pretty sweet feature.

I was also glad to hear he was handling our finances as well. In a worst-case scenario, I was planning on bringing some silver or gold to sell.

"I will also ensure that your phones retain functionality over there. Otherwise, it would be difficult to make a call due to the lack of magic in the atmosphere."

The mass-produced smartphones created by Doctor Babylon made use of magic in the atmosphere to connect two individuals instead of radio waves. I didn't fully understand how it worked, but as long as both parties on the phone were surrounded by the same kind of magic-enriched air, they'd be able to have a conversation.

Considering the fact that the phones worked indoors, that meant the air was even connected in that manner... I wondered if that would mean the phones wouldn't work in a closed-off area. I heard that water had mana infused into it,

but I wasn't sure if the phones would work under the sea, either...

Regardless, if their phones were being tweaked to work on Earth, then that basically just made them regular smartphones.

"The low mana in the atmosphere on Earth will make your magical abilities functionally useless, so please take care. You may be able to create small elements, like ice, but that is all."

Mhm. If there's little to no mana in the atmosphere, magic just won't work. It's like trying to light a fire without any oxygen. Wait, but what about...?

"What about self-applied magic drawn from within your own body, like my sister's **[Boost]** spell?" Linze raised a question, taking the words right out of my mouth. Elze seemed curious about the answer.

"It should be possible, but I advise against doing that. If you exhaust all the magic within your body, you will quickly exhaust your body itself. You would not want to spend your honeymoon bedridden, yes?"

"Oh, I see... The atmospheric magic being so thin means we can't replenish our own body's magic stores. That makes sense," Leen offered some astute commentary. That was definitely a major risk! If someone exhausted all their magic, they'd lose consciousness.

I had the option of giving them some magic back with **[Transfer],** but I wouldn't be able to replenish that amount for myself, either.

"Could we not store the magic in something external, like one of Babylon's tank storage units?"

"I am afraid not. The moment you arrive in the other world, the magic would disperse. The storage tank is powered by magic. Thus, it would lose efficiency in Earth's atmosphere much like other magic tools. Even that little bear would be unable to move on Earth."

Paula cowered behind Leen after hearing that.

Don't worry, Paula. You're staying home... Man, I won't even be able to call Kohaku or the others, since they're such a drain on me. They'll quickly outrun the rate at which my magic restores itself.

Basically, any magical tool or artifact would become useless on Earth. Even the Frame Gears would just be large immobile structures over there.

“Wait. My phone’s charged by magic... Won’t it run out of battery pretty fast?!”

“...Electricity exists on Earth, Touya. You can just use that.”

“...Oh. Yeah. That’s true.”

...Wow, that was a really dumb question on my part, wasn’t it? I feel pretty damn embarrassed right now...

Doctor Babylon had made sure to install charging ports into the mass-produced phones, so they could charge on electricity as well.

“Lack of magic does not bother me, it does not.”

“Same here.”

“Mhm!”

Yae, Hilde, and Lu spoke amongst themselves. I let out a light chuckle upon hearing that, since they were clearly a little despondent about not having any aptitude for the elements.

“Well, magic isn’t a thing on Earth, so I think everyone’ll be fine.”

“Oh, wait! What if something dangerous happens? What do we do if we can’t use our spells?” Sue raised her hand and asked me a question. She had a worried expression on her face. Her concern made sense. Magic was as natural as walking in this world, after all. She’d obviously have some anxiety about being robbed of it.

“It’s fine. We won’t be visiting any war-torn countries or anything. We’re going to a peaceful nation without any danger.”

I highly doubted that we’d have much to worry about in Japan. I couldn’t think of any real uses for magic there, to be honest. I personally thought that going there with magic probably would’ve been more dangerous.

“I wanna ask something else! It’s about you, Touya!”

“Huh? What?”

Sue's sudden direct line of questioning took me by surprise.

"You're supposed to be dead over there, aren't you? So, what are you gonna do about that?!"

"Well, that's fine, honestly."

*Sure, I can't be walking around over there as a dead man, so I'll simply use **[Mirage]** to... Oh. Ohhh...!*

"Uhhh... Wait, what? I can't use disguise magic over there, can I?"

"Technically, you should be able to. If you channel your divinity, you can hypothetically use any spell through that. However, constantly channeling your divinity to maintain a disguise will be incredibly taxing on your body. I doubt you will be able to maintain it for long."

Ugh... Yeah, I agree. Divinity's way harder to control than basic magic. The fine control is a part that I still really struggle with. I can barely keep my hair from growing all the way out when I activate my Apotheosis. If I had the fine-tuned level of control that I actually need, then I wouldn't have Granny Tokie down here repairing the barrier. Keeping my divinity constantly active would be way too stressful. I don't think I'll be able to enjoy my vacation if I do that.

"Touya, if I might... I can change your appearance. It should not burden your body, but it will be a permanent change until you return. That may be a little inconvenient, but it is the best I can do."

Oh, that sounds good! I don't wanna be paranoid about getting caught the entire time.

"Hrmm... I don't want the grand duke's appearance to change... It'd be less fun..."

"Yes... Sakura's right! Even if he'd be Touya on the inside, I don't wanna travel with someone who looks completely different!"

Sakura and Sue objected to God Almighty's proposal. They weren't being unreasonable. It was supposed to be our honeymoon, so I could see why they wouldn't want to spend it with someone who didn't look like their husband. Plus, the main purpose of the trip was to visit my parents in their sleep, and I

needed to look like myself for that.

Wait, nevermind. We'll be in a dream, so I should be able to manipulate my form at will in there.

"Fret not. I have considered the matter of young Touya's form, and this is the solution I have come up with. Behold!" God Almighty suddenly said that, clasped his hands together, and formed a cloud of smoke around me.

"Wah?! Wh-Wh-What was that?!"

I waved my arms around to clear the smoke, but something felt wrong. The sleeves of my coat were far too long, for some reason... And the pitch of my voice was ridiculously high. When the smoke cleared, all of my wives were surrounding me. They were gazing at me with wonder blazing in their eyes.

Wh-What's going on?

"Is this Touya to your liking, young ladies?"

...Man, I don't know if I've ever seen him grin like that before. How weird. Wait... has he always been that tall? Wait... why's everyone so much taller than me? No... Don't tell me...

"[S-Storage]!"

I frantically pulled out a full-sized mirror and propped it up by me. The reflection in the mirror was that of a child. A five-year-old boy who looked far smaller than even Sue.

Wh-What the hell is this?! This isn't an appearance change! You de-aged me!

"Who's this?! Is this really Touya?!"

"A-Ahhh! Amazing! It's a teeny, tiny Touya!"

"S-So cute! He's so cuuute!"

"A-Ahhh! The smaller he is, the better he is! This is fantastic!"

Elze and Linze came roaring in from either side of me. And Yumina and Lu weren't far behind them, either.

H-HELP!



“Amazing! He truly does have the face of Touya-dono, he does!” Yae said as she ran right up to me.

Obviously, it’s my face! I’m still me, damn it!

Yae picked me up from under the armpits and lifted me way up high.

S-Stop! Stop! My pants are falling down!

My body had shrunk, but my clothes sure hadn’t. I frantically reached for my pants, but there was nothing I could do when faced with Yae’s gorilla grip. My pants slipped away.

Right on cue, a sinister wind blew in and lifted up my long shirt.

...Yep. It’s cold down south.

“T-Touya... Don’t be sad, it’s okay...”

“Don’t give me that... You didn’t have your lower half exposed to the elements...”

Lu tried comforting me, but her words didn’t do much to help. If I had the mind of a five-year-old, I probably wouldn’t have been so horrified by what had just happened.

“I am sorry, I am... It is just so rare to see children in the castle, it is...”

Yae really loved kids, so I understood how she felt. Still, that didn’t exactly make me feel any better...

“No pouting, be a good boy! It was an honest mistake. It’s fine! You’re our husband!” Sue said that and grinned as she reached out to pat my head.

...This is a hell of a role reversal. I feel kinda embarrassed about all this...

Karina and Suika laughed as they watched from the nearby table.

“Don’t worry about such little things, Touya. We’re all family here!”

“Wahahaha, hic! You’re reaaaaaally small, little guy! Bwahaha!”

What’s small?! Are you talking about me or my manhood?! What the hell!

Right as I prepared to give Suika a piece of my mind, Sakura warped back with **[Teleport].** She’d quickly gone to Fashion King Zanac.

“Here... I bought some things... underwear included...” Sakura said as she dropped a heavy paper bag on the table.

...Just how much did you buy?!

Immediately after producing the first bag, she produced a bunch more. They were filled to the brim, so I thought they’d burst.

Wait... what’s with the skirts? There’s girls’ clothing in here too!

“You’ll look great in this dress!”

“Ooh, this one’s pretty.”

“If we’re going to dress him up, I should prepare some child-sized armor...”

Lu, Yumina, and Hilde began whispering to each other. I wondered if Hilde was serious about the child-sized armor thing... It honestly made me worry about our future kids.

Whatever they were planning to do to me, I could only hope they’d make it quick.

The girls spent a while dressing me up like a doll, but eventually, they settled on a basic hoodie and some pants. This outfit worked well, since it looked like something an ordinary kid would wear.

“...Are you all quite done?”

“A-Ah! S-Sorry!”

I totally forgot that God Almighty had been there the whole time!

“I think you will be just fine in that child form. Even if you meet someone who knew you as a boy, they will only think of you as a child who resembles you.”

That was definitely true. No one would just assume that some kid was a dead guy they once knew.

“Couldn’t you have just made me look middle-aged or older instead?”

“...I think it is better for everyone if you are a child. Trust me.”

There was something ominous about that pause of his, but he had a point. If I was a middle-aged me walking around with all these girls, I ran the risk of being

apprehended.

Making me into an old man was a viable option, but I'd stick out like a sore thumb with all my wives. Plus, I didn't exactly want to know what I'd look like as an old man... If my body was even capable of becoming old anymore, anyway.

"Ah, and just to clarify... I did not make you any younger. I simply fixed your physical form into one static position. Once you ascend as a god, you should be able to learn that ability as well. I actually have several physical forms other than this one."

"Really? Why stick with the old man look, then?"

"It is more dignified, is it not?"

...Well, that's a pretty generic answer. But it is what it is.

"Well, that's it for preparation. Oh, girls. You should get changed into different outfits before we leave tomorrow, or you'll stick out too much over there."

Their appearances were fine, but their clothing definitely wasn't normal by Earth's standards. Most people would just assume Yae to be Japanese, but the other girls had eye and hair colors that would make them look like foreigners. Sakura's hair alone would definitely turn some heads.

I wondered if she could get a wig or something... Or maybe hair dye was the better option.

"Fashion King Zanac had a lot of clothing in stock... Since it's all based on clothing from the grand duke's world, we should go get some."

"Sounds good to me. Let's go buy a few days' worth of clothing."

Leen nodded at Sakura's suggestion, and all the girls agreed.

Shouldn't we just buy the clothes over there? I mean, we got free money and all...

"Come on, Touya. It's time to go."

"Huh? Me too?!"

Before I could react, Elze yanked me away by the arm. My other arm was

promptly seized by Yae.

“You’ve got **[Storage],** dear. You can carry our things!”

Please no... I’m too small to carry your things! Well, whatever, it’s fine... Just don’t treat me like a dress-up doll again.

“Then I shall see you all in the morning. Take care.”

“O-Oh, yeah! Thanks again!”

God Almighty chuckled softly and gave us a wave. I bowed my head in apology as I was dragged off.

The honeymoon hadn’t even started yet, but everyone was already raring to go.

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Everyone in the castle wondered why I looked like a child. It was a pretty reasonable line of questioning. I simply told them I was using **[Mirage]** to change my appearance, but that begged the question of why? And, by extension, why a five-year-old’s body?

In the end, I just kind of sidelined all the questioning. I couldn’t tell them a god had come down and turned me into a little kid.

“It would’ve been better if he’d transformed me right before the trip...”

I was way smaller, so I picked up some child-sized pajamas at Zanac’s store. I still didn’t know how to feel when I looked at myself in my bedroom mirror. It felt pretty surreal.

“Make sure you pack a lot of clothing. Do not forget anything, do not.”

“Gah!”

Damn it... Couldn’t you have made me a little bit older or at least a little bit heavier?

I winced slightly as Yae picked me up by the armpits again. It felt like I was losing pride as a man by the second, but it wasn’t really my fault... It was my body!

“You are so cute, yes you are... I wonder if this is how it will be when I have

my own son, I do...”

“...Just don’t ever bring him here to dress him up like a girl.”

“Don’t fault us, Grand Duke... It was important research... We needed to investigate how our daughters might look. Please understand...”

I groaned slightly at Sakura’s fairly casual and blunt response. Even with their excuses, I couldn’t help but feel like I’d been violated somehow.

“Hey, Leen, what’re you gonna do about your wings? It’s not like you can cast **[Invisible]** over there. There aren’t any fairies in that Earth place, right?” Elze sat on the bed, brushing her hair as she said that and pointed toward Leen’s back. She’d raised a good point.

“Oh, that won’t be an issue. The only reason you can see my wings is because a special pigment in them reacts to the mana in our atmosphere. On a planet such as Earth, there won’t be enough magic to reflect them, which will render them invisible. In a worst-case scenario, however, I could always flit my wings down against my back, then hide them beneath my clothes.”

Leen flattened her wings against her back to demonstrate her point. I’d briefly considered asking God Almighty to hide her wings, but apparently, that wasn’t necessary.

“What about Sakura’s horns?” Linze raised another fair question as she tapped her own forehead.

“My horns can retract enough to be obscured by my hair... It should be fine.”

That felt awfully convenient. Sakura’s horns had unique properties, since she was one of the overlord’s kin, so she had some degree of control over their length. They could flicker forward and retract like animal claws. That made me wonder if they were made out of keratin. I’d heard that vampires could retract and extend their claws, so it also made me curious if the overlord’s unique genetics had a little bit of that mixed in there.

The only other point of concern about Sakura was the fact that she had pointed ears, but if anyone asked, we’d just play it off as being a fashion trend or something.

“Your world sure is amazing, Touya... Even at night, the place twinkles like the stars...”

Sue was transfixed on the image I’d projected into the air. More specifically, it was a live feed of Tokyo.

We weren’t going to be staying in the big city, though.

“There are so many ether vehicles in the streets. Fascinating.”

“Indeed. From what I’ve noticed, the green light tells them when to move, while the red light tells them when to stop.”

Yumina and Lu were going over some of the things I’d told them about in advance. I figured it’d be smarter to give them a primer on certain basic things instead of just addressing them as we came across them and causing potential issues.

By using the **[Recall]** spell, I managed to share some elements of my legal knowledge with them. I also shared certain knowledge of technology, because I knew if I didn’t Yae would probably act like a samurai plucked into the modern era and attack a TV or something. If they were briefed on stuff beforehand, it made things less likely to go wrong. There were a few artifacts in this world that were similar to Earth technology anyway, so it wasn’t that hard to introduce those concepts to them. Plus, I’d shown them movies and shows before, so I doubted they’d be completely lost when it came to things like television.

“I’m rather worried about traveling around without my sword... I can’t imagine being without it.”

“I feel the exact same way, I do. However, if I cannot wield a wakizashi in the streets, then I will simply remain on guard with martial arts at all times, I will.”

Hilde and Yae expressed a little bit of discomfort. I found that a little annoying, honestly. I’d already explained to them that we weren’t going to get into a combat situation in the other world, and even if we did, we wouldn’t be facing the kinds of enemies we encountered here. No thugs with knives stood a chance against my wives.

They didn’t seem fully aware of it, but they were unreasonably strong compared to normal humans. They wouldn’t even need magic to handle most

bad guys at this point. Even Sue, the weakest of the bunch, was more than a match for a party of veterans.

Yae, Hilde, Elze, and Lu honed their physical skills every day, while Yumina, Linze, Leen, and Sakura honed their magical skills. Takeru and Moroha made sure of that. And Sue and Sakura had even been learning special techniques from Lapis and Tsubaki.

On top of all that, they all benefited from tons of divinity from multiple gods. No human from Earth would be able to lay even a finger on them. Frankly, I was more worried about the damage they could do to others, rather than the other way around.

Hopefully, we'd be able to get through the trip without any unnecessary trouble.

"We've got a big day ahead of us, so we should sleep early," Yumina said as she patted the pillow next to her. Usually, I slept at the end of the bed or on a separate couch, but now that I was a married man, I had no such reservations about sharing a bed with my wives.

Given that I was in a child's body, sleeping was the only thing we'd be doing that evening. I didn't know whether to thank God Almighty for that or resent him.

"I wanna sleep next to Touya! I call dibs!"

"Gwah?!"

Sue tackled me from behind, wrapping her arms around my front in a bear hug.

"No fair... I want to hug him as well, Sue..." Sakura mumbled as she shuffled over toward me, embracing me from the front. I was sandwiched between the two of them. Ordinarily, that would've been a pretty enviable position, but in a five-year-old's body, it wasn't as exciting as it should've been.

"Hrrgh..."

"That's enough, you two. Touya doesn't seem all that happy about it."

Lu came to my rescue, gently prying the two girls from me. Sakura and Sue

simply responded by pouting a little.

Sakura had a surprisingly clingy side to her, and she often competed with Sue when it came to my physical affection. And her childish behavior was made all the more amusing by the fact that she was older than both Lu and Yumina.

“Are you okay, Touya?”

“I am now. Thanks, Lu.”

“Now then... Let’s get you to bed.”

“Huh?”

Lu suddenly hugged me tight, pulling me down sideways to the bed.

Wh—? You’re just repeating what Sue did!

“No fair, Lu! He’s mine!”

Seeing her chance, Yumina charged in and embraced me from behind. Sakura and Sue then closed in from the sides; I was locked in a four-way nightmare wife sandwich.

I’m done for...

“Hmph... I think I deserve to sleep by Touya-dono’s side, I do.”

“Quite honestly... I don’t want to just watch.”

“H-Hey, Sis... Shouldn’t we go after him too?”

“Y-Yeah! We’ve got the right to be in there! I wanna sleep next to Touya!”

“Goodness me... I know we’re all excited about our darling’s unusual form, but is this how we’re going to behave every night? We should settle things here and now,” Leen said that, then clapped her hands together and produced a box of rectangular blocks from beneath the bed. After that, she promptly stacked them all up until they formed a tower.

The tower was made up of fifty-four identical rectangular blocks. Each tier of the tower had three of those blocks lined up next to each other. It was a very popular party game back home. The goal was to take turns pulling out the blocks, with the loser determined by whoever made the tower fall.

The one Leen had pulled out was a leftover prototype I'd produced for Olba Strand.

"So we're settling it this way?"

"I see... So we'll be eliminated until one remains..."

Elze and Linze nodded quietly. All of the girls had played this game before, so there wasn't any unfair advantage when it came to individual ability.

"Okay! Let's go!"

Sue charged toward the table, enthusiasm burning in her eyes. All the other girls shrugged and joined in as well. Personally, I thought it would've been better to sleep instead of staying up all night playing party games, but I wasn't in charge...

I leaned back into the soft mattress. Every now and then, I heard clattering noises and gasps, but I quickly faded away to sleep without finding out who won.

My slumber was a restless one, unfortunately. I was plagued by nightmares about Tentaculars grabbing me.

I woke up in the middle of the night, completely immobilized by the girls. Some of them held my arms, while others held my legs. I didn't want to stay in that position, but I also didn't want to disturb them by jostling around, so I escaped with **[Teleport].**

It was no wonder I'd had such vivid nightmares. They'd probably been pawing at me.

Freed from the bed, I took my pillow to the nearby couch and snuggled up next to Kohaku. Then, I faded off to sleep once more. This time my dreams were peaceful. Though, I think I might've had one small nightmare about squishing Kohaku with my butt. And when I woke up, I realized that I'd done exactly that in my sleep.

"Now then, are you ready?" God Almighty smiled as he posed that question.

We were in Babylon's garden. Karen and the other gods had come to see us off, along with Doctor Babylon, Cesca, and even Ende and Melle.

The moment Ende saw my child-like stature, he burst out laughing. I made a mental note not to bring any souvenirs back for that bastard...

Yumina and the others had changed into their Earth-appropriate clothing, and they really just looked pretty normal. But not in a plain way or anything. It went without saying that they looked exceptionally cute.

Assuming all went well, every Japanese person we came across would assume they were all (save Yae), foreign tourists. I wasn't entirely sure if we'd stand out or not, but there was only one way to find out.

If anyone asked, we'd planned to use a cover story that Yae and I were Japanese siblings who were showing around a group of foreign friends.

We didn't have any luggage with us, either. The only things we'd planned to take were our phones. I could use my Divinity to interface with my phone and activate its **[Storage]** function, so I put our travel expenses and everyone's clothing inside.

I was glad my smartphone had become a sacred treasure. After all, if it was just a regular magic object, it wouldn't work on Earth. Even ether vehicles and Frame Gears would be completely useless there.

My Brunhild wouldn't be able to transform to blade mode and back, either. Not that I'd be bringing it. No sane place on Earth would just be so lax as to let someone casually walk around with a gun.

"Well then, it seems you're all ready to go. You can contact me through your phone, Touya, so just let me know when you wish to return. I shall be right there for you."

"Got it."

"Now then, I hope you all have a lovely trip," God Almighty said that, then waved his hand outward.

A sudden burst of light assaulted my eyes. When my vision returned, my surroundings were completely different. We weren't in Babylon's garden anymore. Instead, we found ourselves in the middle of a forest-lined road.

"W-We're there already?!" Linze exclaimed as her eyes darted around in a

bewildered flurry.

We were on a small paved road that stretched out between the emerald-green trees.

“Hey... Is this really Urf? Looks like a normal forest to me...”

“...It’s Earth, not Urf. And we’re definitely not in our world. Just look at me,” Leen addressed Elze’s mispronunciation, then gestured toward herself. Her wings weren’t visible. If you squinted really hard, you could kind of make out an outline where they were, but no one who wasn’t specifically looking for them would notice.

“So we are on the planet Urf, we are... But where exactly, Touya-dono?” Yae turned to me with a question.

Wait, are we...?

“Ah... T-Touya?!”

I started to sprint down the road at full speed, ignoring Lu’s confused yell. The path grew narrower as I sped down it... until I came to an uphill slope.

I spotted a single building with a red roof on top of the slope. Nostalgia washed over me. I was stunned to silence by the sight of the place. It was a western-style red brick building that was probably built in the early 1900s.

The girls managed to catch up to me, and they all looked up at the building as well.

“This house... Is this your old home, Touya?” Linze made a good guess, but I shook my head. It wasn’t my home. My house wasn’t western-styled. Though, we were within a few train rides of the place.

Anyway, this house was one I knew well, but I didn’t grow up here. It was nostalgic for completely different reasons.

“This house... used to be my grandpa’s.”

My grandpa died when I was in junior high, so I hadn’t visited since. It seemed like my mother had still been tending to the place, though. The garden looked to be in pristine condition.

It felt a little strange, honestly... The grandpa who lived here came from my mother's side. And my mother was a rather bold and brash woman, despite her modest job as a picture book author, so I didn't expect her to still be taking care of this place...

The phone in my pants pocket began to vibrate. It was God Almighty.

"Hey-o."

"Oh, good. Did you make it there safely?"

"We did... But why here of all places?"

"I thought you would need a solid location to use as a base of sorts. I made sure that the water and electricity were running properly as well. You are familiar with the location, no?"

I mean, yeah, but... Well, I guess this is pretty smart, actually. If we all tried checking into a hotel, they might get confused about the lack of adults and call the police.

"Is it okay if we stay here without permission?"

"Come now, this place belongs to your family! Plus, it is not as if you will be there for long. So, why not?"

...Well, maybe because the owner is dead and I'm a five-year-old boy?

In the end, I agreed, since the remote location made it unlikely we'd get any visitors. In fact, the main reason my family didn't move here was because of how isolated it was.

I'll just apologize to my parents for intruding when I visit them in their dreams. That should be good enough.



“Hey, look! Door’s unlocked!”

Right when I finished up my call with God Almighty, Sue scampered up to the front door and flung it open without any hesitation at all.

A little flash of light appeared in the air in front of me. Then, the door’s key appeared by my feet. Presumably, this was also his doing.

Did God Almighty unlock the door, or did my mother just forget to lock it in the first place? If she forgot, I hope nobody started squatting here illegally or anything... Wait, no, that’s exactly what we’re doing right now, isn’t it...?

I shrugged my shoulders and picked up the key, silently apologizing to my late grandfather for the inconvenience all the while.

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“Oh, hey! The lights work!”

There was a switch right by the doorway, so I flipped it. The area around the door was instantly illuminated. It was good to know the electricity was working.

If the place is the same as it was when grandpa died, then there should be a fridge and TV around here, too... Wait, huh?

The lights started flickering on and off. Initially, I wondered if the bulbs were going out, but it turned out to just be Leen flicking the switch.

Don’t do that!

“It really does work without magic... So this is electricity, hm? The ability to harness the element of lightning is impressive...”

“Yep. The switch there turns the lights on and off.”

“Most fascinating... Most fascinating indeed...” Leen smiled softly as she looked up at the retro-style light.

“Let’s goooooo!” Sue roared as she charged forward through the door, stomping down the hallway. She was tracking dirt with her, and the other girls weren’t far behind.

Wait! Stop, stop!

“Wait, everyone! You must remove your shoes when you enter this house, you must!”

“Good job, Yae! I’m glad at least you know.”

Yae was from Eashen, a nation that had many customs similar to Japan, so she understood that this house was just western-styled and not actually a western building. Even if it looked like something you’d find in a western country, you couldn’t just wear shoes in the house. That’d be way too dirty.

The girls realized their mistake, then quickly returned to the porch. Unfortunately, they’d trailed a little bit of dirt inside... Hopefully, there were some cleaning supplies around.

The girls must’ve thought we were in a western country because of how the house looked. But luckily, they were familiar enough with Eashenese customs to get the message. We all took our shoes off and headed inside.

My grandpa’s house often had visitors, but there weren’t enough slippers for ten people. Still, it would be fine to go around barefoot. The house didn’t have a speck of dust in the place! I didn’t know whether to thank God Almighty or my mother for that, but I had a feeling it was probably the latter.

I wanted to check the water in the bathroom, but I was so pathetically small that I failed to reach the toilet.

“Here, I’ll get it,” Elze said as she flushed the toilet for me. It went off without a hitch.

Phew... Now we don’t need to worry about our bathroom needs.

“Grand Duke! Is this the terryvision?!”

“Ohhh! A tee bee!”

Sakura and Sue got excited when they saw the flat-screen television in the living room. They knew about TVs thanks to me putting on movies for them, but they’d never actually seen one in person.

“How do we control it without magic?”

“There’s probably a switch like with the lights, right?”

Linze and Elze walked up to the television, looking for obvious ways to turn it on.

Uhhh... Where's the remote... Oh, there it is!

I picked up the remote control from a nearby side table, then pressed a button. The power light on the TV turned green, and a zebra appeared on the screen. It was a rerun of some animal documentary.

"Oh! A horse! So this world has horses too!"

"Huh? Why's it striped...?"

"That's not a horse, it's a tiger! It's colored just like Kohaku!"

"It's definitely a horse, Sis..."

I'd never seen any zebras in the other world, so presumably, they just didn't have them. They did, however, have a striped monster known as a Tiger Bear.

Huh?!

Lu suddenly picked me up and dragged me into the kitchen. There was a large sink, two gas stoves, a fridge, a microwave, a toaster, a coffee maker, and various other things. My grandpa lived alone, so his house was well equipped.

"Touya! Can I make use of this equipment?!"

"Uhhh... yes...? Maybe? Yeah."

Lu, driven by her love for all things culinary, looked over the kitchen with an amazed expression on her face. Then, she held me up as I made sure the faucet worked and checked the gas stove. Everything seemed just fine. And since we had gas, we'd have heated water for the bath. Though, the bath in this place was pretty small.

"What's this big box and this little box?"

"The big one's called a fridge. Essentially, it keeps your food cold. The little one is a microwave oven that heats your food."

Lu set me down, walked over to the fridge, and opened it.

"You weren't lying... It's actually cold inside it..."

“Yeah... There’s no food in there, though.”

The fridge was completely bare, but that wasn’t exactly surprising. It was shiny and clean, but there was no reason for it to be fully stocked.

Lu found the kitchen knives, a whisk, and various other cooking utensils. She asked me a ton of questions, but to be honest, my knowledge was kind of limited.

After a short while, Lu found a cookbook in one of the cabinets. Her attention immediately shifted toward it, allowing me to make a daring escape.

I went back to the living room and found Elze, Linze, Sue, and Sakura still glued to the TV.

Huh? Where are Yumina and the rest of them?

I walked into the hallway and heard talking from upstairs. They were in my grandfather’s study, which was just a short walk away. It had a ton of books, but I never really went inside. Leen and Yumina naturally had an interest in the books there, but I wondered what Hilde and Yae were doing. I could clearly hear their voices from the study, but just what were they talking about?

“How old is Touya-dono here?”

“He must have been three or four.”

“Pfft... He’s crying.”

“Our darling was quite cute at this age, wasn’t he?”

That doesn’t sound good...

I glanced into the study and saw the four girls peeking into a thick book.

Hm? What’s...? Oh no!

“Oh, Touya.”

“Where’d you find that?!”

“We found it on the desk, right here. I opened it up to take a look, and it was filled with familiar faces,” Leen grinned gently as she spoke.

Don’t mock me... It’s not my fault that my grandpa kept an extensive photo

album of me! I remember he'd chase me around with his camera, and even take candid shots without me knowing!

"I'm confiscating that!"

I dashed forward and snatched the album from Yumina's hands.

Did God Almighty leave this thing out here?! It should've been sealed away, damn it!

"Do not be embarrassed, Touya-dono. Many people have wet the bed as a child, they have."

"You saw that too?!"

Utter embarrassment coursed through my veins as I used my divinity to open up **[Storage]** and throw the album beyond their reach.

Ack... Huh?

Leen noticed my surprise and raised her brow.

"What's wrong?"

"Well, uh... when I used **[Storage]** just now, I felt my divinity drain way faster. I didn't think it'd be this hard..."

Karen had told me to channel my divinity through my smartphone instead of using it directly, and I understood why.

I used my Smartphone to open up the **[Storage]** app instead. It was definitely easier that way, so using the smartphone as a crutch was the way to go. It was kind of like using an electric-assisted motorcycle.

"I knew Earth didn't have much magic in its atmosphere, but I didn't think it'd be this scarce... We could technically use magic here, but it'd take considerable preparation and would likely need a lot of supplementary equipment."

If Leen's hypothesis was correct, then magic could have seen some use on Earth. Perhaps some of our myths and legends weren't quite as fabricated as we'd thought.

"Touya! I'm hungryyy!"

I heard Sue call out to me from downstairs. When I glanced at the clock in the

study, I noticed that it was already past noon. Later than I'd expected, honestly.

Unfortunately, the fridge was empty... There was some food in **[Storage],** but I'd come all the way to Earth. It was time for some of our cuisine.

Everyone else agreed with me about eating Earth food, so we made our way into the nearby town.

There was a fair bit of distance between Grandpa's house and the commercial district, but I had enough bicycles in **[Storage]** for all of us, so that helped... Except my legs couldn't reach the pedals, so Elze just let me ride with her instead.

I noticed a local diner by the main street, so we decided to eat there.

It was a little dangerous walking through the main street, though... All the girls kept getting distracted by the traffic lights, cars, guard rails, and traffic mirrors. They even ran into the middle of the road at one point, which was frightening...

Thankfully, the restaurant wasn't too crowded, but it did have some remnants of the lunch rush. We were led to a large table where the girls excitedly glanced over the pictures on the menu. By the time the food reached us, the girls had gotten most of their excitement out of their system, however.

Yumina ordered omelet rice, Elze ordered diced steak, Linze ordered the shrimp gratin, Yae ordered beef stew (and a pork loin cutlet, and a chicken fried steak, and a pork bowl), Hilde ordered tomato-eggplant spaghetti, Lu ordered grilled fish with Japanese vegetables, Sue ordered fried shrimp and a hamburg steak, Leen ordered a club sandwich, and Sakura ordered a bacon pizza. I got the kid's lunch set, since I figured I might as well use the opportunity to order it.

"Ohhh! This is yummy!" Sue let out a gleeful cheer after she took a bite. A sense of deja vu washed over me. She'd had a similar reaction the first time she'd ever eaten a roll cake.

"It tastes quite unusual, but it's certainly delicious. There are many unfamiliar flavors in here..." Lu, whose tongue was sensitive enough to detect even a single grain of salt, took her time savoring her meal. I wondered if the unfamiliar flavors were the result of natural ingredients or chemical ones. Either

way, I hoped she was enjoying her meal and not focusing too hard on the analysis aspect.

We didn't just stick to our individual orders. The girls took great pleasure in sharing amongst themselves. I couldn't eat too much, though. It seemed my appetite had shrunk with my size.

"I would like to try the deezurt, I would."

"...Dessert, you mean. And you're still hungry?"

Apparently, Yae was still hungry, and so were the other girls. They hurriedly started glancing over the dessert menu.

I guess you guys have a separate stomach for sweet stuff, huh?

Soon enough, the table was covered in strawberry pancakes, chocolate parfaits, mille-feuille, fondant, matcha, ice cream, and cakes a-plenty. There were even more dishes than they'd ordered for their main course! The sweet fragrance was overwhelming, so I quickly drowned it out with a post-meal coffee.

"Touya, what shall we do next?"

"Don't tell me you're already thinking about dinner..." I laughed at Lu's question, but it was true that we didn't have anything in our fridge. We didn't want to rely on food from **[Storage],** so a trip to the grocery store was probably in order.

"I'd like to visit a bookstore."

"Ah, so would I."

Leen and Linze seemed to have already made their decision.

"Well... I want to check out some clothing."

"I wanna go somewhere fun!"

"I'd like to inspect the local weapons."

Elze and Sue's courses of action seemed simple enough, but Hilde's request was tricky. I quickly explained to her that she couldn't just buy stuff like swords and spears. Though, if she went to a hobby store, she could probably find

bamboo weapons for kendo practice. Still, the girls wanted to go all over the place...

I don't really know my way around here, so... Hmm... What should I...? Oh, I know.

"Excuse me!"

"Yes, can I help you?"

I flagged down a passing waitress, and she gave a big smile when she noticed I was a little boy.

"About five years ago, I heard they built a department store around here. Where is it?"

"Department store? Oh, right! Yeah. There's a mall just down the street. Take a sharp left and you can't miss the sign. Wait, did you say you heard about it five years ago?"

"Um... Ummm... My sister heard it! She did! Haha!"

"Um?! Uh?! I did, did I?! I did!"

I quickly yanked on Yae's arm and laughed nervously. That was risky... I needed to act more like a five-year-old boy.

The waitress smiled awkwardly and got back to work as soon as possible. She probably thought I was a weird kid...

Yumina tapped me on the shoulder.

"Touya, what's a mall?"

"Oh uh, it's like a big building with a bunch of stores in it. You can find food there, clothes, shoes, and so on."

"Is there a bookstore there too?"

"Should be, yeah."

Linze beamed after hearing that. Thanks to her wedding ring, she could read any language.

"Alrighty! Let's head to the mall after we're done eating. We can pick up some

food for dinner, too.”

“Hurray!”

When I mentioned grocery shopping, Lu clapped her hands together with glee. The girls, all looking forward to visiting the mall, started chowing down on the rest of their desserts.

One by one, the sweet treats vanished. I couldn’t understand how they ate such sugary stuff... I took another gulp of my bitter coffee as the sweet scent assaulted my nostrils.

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“Wow... This place is pretty big.”

“Oho! So this is a shopping hall!”

Mall... I sighed quietly. The place was quite surprising, in all honesty. The last time I’d visited the area, there was nothing here.

We parked our bicycles outside, chained them up, and then headed to the entrance. The girls started looking around all the shops with vested interest, and their behavior was drawing a bit of attention. Other than Yae and I, we stood out pretty clearly as a group of foreigners. Hopefully, they thought Sakura’s hair was just dyed or something.

“Ooh! It’s all so fancy!” Elze let out an amazed gasp as she saw the bright lights shining down on various fashionable mannequins. She looked from store to store, each one different from the other. Some sold bags, some sold accessories, and others sold shoes.

I stopped Elze from charging into the stores and brought the girls to an information board by the escalator.

Five floors and a basement, huh? Simple enough.

“Touya! Those stairs are moving!”

“I saw this in some of our darling’s memories. It’s called an escalayer. Most interesting...”

“Uhhh... Hilde, Leen? Don’t make comments like that. You’ll draw unneeded

attention.”

I glanced to the side and noticed the girls were staring at the escalator in disbelief. The people on the escalator looked back down at them, probably confused as to why they were being so intently studied. I felt pretty awkward about it, to be honest.

“What is this, a map?” Linze asked as she peered over at the information board.

“It is, yeah. Do you wanna see?”

Let’s see here... Bookstore’s on the fourth floor, along with movies and music. Then, there are some attractions on the fifth. Arcade’s there, too...

Since there were so many people around, I couldn’t exactly use **[Storage]** for the grocery shopping.

We should start with the bookstore first... Wait, what?

“...Gimme a sec, guys. I’ll be right back.”

“Huh? Touya?”

I quickly ran off after telling Yumina and the others to stay put. I’d recognized a duo who’d just passed by, and I needed to find them.

After a few moments of running, I saw them. An old man and his wife, walking hand in hand. It was Mr. and Mrs. Asano. The sight of them really brought back memories.

Mr. Asano was a friend of my grandpa’s, and I’d met him a few times. He used to give me candy whenever I saw him, even going so far as to bring one to my grandpa’s funeral. I was happy to see he was doing okay.

I watched the two of them from afar for a little while, but I couldn’t stay there looking at them forever. And so, I gathered my sentimentality up and headed back to the escalator... But by the time I made it back, none of the girls were there.

“Whaaat?!”

I scurried around in a panic.

They're normally easy to spot, but I'm way too short to get a good look around! Oh, wait! Over there! I can see Elze's silvery hair! I gotta catch them before it's too late!

I rushed into a store and saw Elze talking to an assistant. Unfortunately, she was completely alone.

"Oh, Touya. Which outfit looks better?" Elze asked as she held up a fluffy blue dress in one hand and a red checkered dress in the other. Both looked really cute.

Hmm... It's Elze, so I feel like the red one suits her better... Wait! I can't afford to get distracted here!

"Elze! Where are the other girls?"

"We all decided where to go based on the board, and headed there! It'll save a lot of time if we just do that and meet up later, you know?!"

I mean... yeah, but no! I know from experience that wandering around in another world is a recipe for disaster!

I whipped out my phone and called Yumina. There was no reply. Had she gotten into trouble already?!

"Oh, we left our phones at the house."

"Why would you do that?!"

"We can't use magic here, so what if they get stolen? We wouldn't be able to get them back."

The mass-produced smartphones were enchanted with **[Apport]** and **[Teleport],** so you could recall them to your hand if they got lost.

Sure, that function won't work here, but why wouldn't you bring your phone anyway?! This is exactly the kind of situation where you need it!

"Ugh... Damn it... **[Search].** "

I quietly channeled my divinity through my phone to trigger the **[Search]** app. Now I'd be able to find out where the girls were.

Crap... It's a birds-eye view, so I can't see what floor they're on. It says Sue's

right around the corner, but I don't see her, so she's probably on one of the floors above.

As I grumbled, Elze still struggled to decide on her outfit.

"Mmm... I like the color on this one, but this one's more breathable, right? Hmm..."

"We'll take both."

I turned to the assistant with a smile, ending Elze's dilemma. I had no time to waste, since I had to find the other girls before they got into any trouble. If they got caught by police officers, they had no form of ID on them. That'd be a huge problem.

Ugh... This shopping mall just turned into a dungeon with a hell of an annoying fetch quest.

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Even though I got separated from the girls, they were still connected to me through divinity. If I were to utilize my apotheosis to its fullest limit, I'd know their exact whereabouts. Right now, though, I just had a vague idea.

If they were in danger, my senses would be alerted to their location. Thankfully, nothing like that had happened, and ideally, nothing like that was going to happen.

"We thought it'd be okay to leave for a bit, sorry."

"Well, it's my own fault for getting distracted. Let's just round the others up as soon as we can."

There wasn't any immediate danger, but they could still get into trouble. I left the clothing store with Elze, holding her hand in mine so we didn't get separated. Her other hand held the bag of clothes she'd just picked up.

"They're not on the ground floor."

I'd used my magic to figure out where they were, for the most part. This place was big, but it wasn't larger than Brunhild castle. If we went out and looked, I knew we'd find the girls again.

Kind of annoying how well you guys managed to fan out... More than kind of, really. I guess I'll go from top to bottom, since the grocery store's in the basement and we were gonna head there last.

Based on my search results, Yae and Lu were likely already down there. That also fit with their personalities.

"Hm? Are we gonna ride the escargator?"

"No. We need to go up to the fifth floor, so we'll take the elevator."

I dragged Elze to the elevator and clicked the call button. She raised her brow in surprise when the button began to glow red. Eventually, the elevator came down to the first floor, and a family walked out.

Once it was fully vacant, I went in and pressed the button that held the door open.

"C'mon, Elze."

"Huh? Oh, right!"

Elze got distracted by the family and almost missed the ride. I was a little concerned, but once she safely got inside, I pressed the button to close the door.

"I-It closed?!"

"Yeah, don't worry. It'll open up in a minute."

"Eek!"

Once the elevator started to move, Elze shrieked and clung to my side. She clearly wasn't used to this.

"It's okay. We're in a box that's slowly moving upward. I'll take us to the fifth floor."

"I-I know that! I've seen elegators in movies before... I just never thought about how it'd feel!" Elze grumbled and tried to bluff some courage. I just shrugged and looked at the floor display in response.

We finally arrived at the fifth floor. Despite the fact that Elze knew we'd be on a different floor, she still seemed surprised as she stepped outside.

If I was right, Sue was on this floor. She was apparently at an arcade on the far end of the floor.

I dragged Elze along again, taking her to an amusement corner. There were crane games, arcade cabinets, photobooths, and sticker machines dotted about.

“What is this place? It’s kinda noisy...” Elze said, apparently not appreciating the ambiance. Thankfully, Sue had hair that was as vibrant as Elze’s, so it was easy to pick her out.

Sue had her face pressed up against a crane game window. The interior was lined with packets of candy. Just what was she doing?

“Sue.”

“Oh! You guys! This masheen isn’t working... Not even when I press the button! Does it hate me...?” Sue groaned and sniffled as she pressed the buttons on the machine, completely ignoring the fact that it required money to operate. I’d forgotten to give everyone some pocket change...

I’d brought the concept of gacha machines to their world through Olba’s store, so it was safe to assume they didn’t know about games like this. I pulled a hundred yen coin from my wallet and slotted it into the crane game, then pushed the button, and the crane went diving down into the pile of candy.

“Ooh! It’s moving!” Sue giggled as the crane grabbed some candy. Most of them slipped back into the pile, but three pieces of candy stayed until the end.

“And that’s how you do it.”

“I wanna try! Touya! Lemme try!”

I let Sue take my spot. The game let you try it three times for a hundred yen, so there were two more tries left.

As I watched Sue excitedly control the crane, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned to see Elze holding her hand out... She clearly wanted a turn as well.

Elze cheerily took some money and went to try her hand at a game. After we’d spent a total of five-hundred yen, I brought the festivities to a halt.

I took a plastic bag from the side of the case and put some candies inside

before handing them off to Sue. She beamed a smile brighter than the sun itself. For five hundred yen, we definitely could've gotten better snacks, but I didn't want to ruin the moment.

Now we had Sue, so it was time to scout the fourth floor.

The three of us took the escalator downstairs. And the moment we made it to the fourth floor, I spotted Sakura. She was standing in front of a CD store, humming along to an idol song blaring from some speakers. There was a small crowd surrounding her.

Sakura's hair really made her stand out. Even though she was cheerily watching the idol video and humming along to it, nobody had approached her. There was a kind of unearthly air around her that made her hard to talk to.

"Sakura."

"Grand Duke... This song is amazing... I want it..." Sakura said as she started breathing heavily. I could see her nostrils flaring.

Okay, calm down...

My grandpa had a CD player at his place, so we could probably buy it for later. We could listen to it right away if we downloaded it to my phone, but it was better to buy things you liked. Plus, it'd make for a good memory with Sakura.

"You must really like it, huh?"

"Mhm. I know all the words... Want me to sing?"

"Oh, that's not necessary. We'll listen to it when we get home."

If Sakura started singing here, she'd draw a huge amount of attention. We didn't have the doctor's mic, and she couldn't activate her vocal magic either, but there's no way her performance wouldn't attract a crowd.

We left the store with a CD in hand. If my calculations were correct, Linze and Leen were also on this floor.

They were both in the same place... Presumably, a bookstore. It was actually a fairly big store with a wide variety of books, as well as a section for stationary.

"Oh, there's Leen."

“Hm?”

Sue tapped my shoulder and pointed toward a bookshelf. Leen stood over in the corner of an aisle, browsing books in the world mythology section. It had books about events ranging from Greek mythology to Indian folklore to Japanese stories.

Leen smiled, not even looking up from her book as we approached. Though, she closed it when we got near her, probably because she sensed us through our divine connection.

“Ah, darling! Right on time. May I buy this book?”

“You don’t need my permission... Wait, you’re interested in mythology?”

“I am. The stories are rather interesting. Some are even similar to heroic tales from back home.”

Really...? I guess that would be interesting to someone from another world. I wonder just how similar some of the legends are, though.

God Almighty had told me that he’d chosen to send me to that particular world because, while it was quite different, it also had many similarities in its history, naming conventions, and code of laws. It was different enough to be something new, but still somewhat familiar.

We’d found Leen, so now we just had to find Linze.

“She went searching for a novel.”

Novels, huh? Let’s see...

I walked through the aisles, checking the genre labels.

Horror... History... Mystery... Sci-Fi... Fantasy... Nope, she’s not here. But I can sense her nearby...

“I feel like Linze is probably into romance novels. I think she was talking about them, at least,” Elze chimed in. She knew her best, so I followed her advice and eventually found Linze engrossed in a book.

She actually was in the romance section... The book in Linze’s hands had an interesting cover... It portrayed a blushing young man being embraced from

behind by another young man in glasses.

“Ohhh!” Linze was so engrossed in the novel that she clearly hadn’t noticed us. She flipped through the pages at breakneck speed, sniffling and gasping every now and then.

...Yeah, I don’t think she should be reading this stuff... She’s gonna draw attention...

I didn’t want to just keep standing there, so I called out to her.

“...You wanna buy that book, Linze?”

“Huh?! T-Touya?! Oh, everyone else?!”

Linze stood up straight, shocked to see us. Then, she quickly hid the book behind her back. It was a little late for that, though, given that there was an entire bookcase of that particular genre right next to her.

“C’mon, you should buy it, then read it at home. It’s not good to read stuff before you’ve bought it.”

“O-Oh, right! Yeah!”

“Was there anything else you wanted to buy?”

“Oh, yes. Um... this one, and this one... This one, too! I also thought this series was quite interesting. Ah yes, there’s also this one...”

Waiiiiiit! Linze, stop! That’s practically the entire bookshelf! I can technically afford it, but isn’t that a bit much?!



We gathered all the books and took them to the checkout counter. The clerk was initially shocked, but we managed to pay for them without incident.

Next up was the third floor, but we needed to find a bathroom first. I didn't need to go or anything, I just needed a private space to activate **[Storage]** and put all our heavy bags away.

I entered the men's room. It was empty except for a man who was washing his hands. He was initially quite confused by the sight of me, which I couldn't blame him for. It wasn't every day you saw a 5-year-old child walk into a bathroom with several massive paper bags.

I went into a stall and waited for the man to leave. Then, I channeled my divinity through my phone and activated **[Storage],** stashing Elze's clothing, Sue's candy, as well as Leen and Linze's books. My arms were certainly thankful for the lightened load.

Being on Earth really hammered in just how convenient magic was. It was a pain to only be able to use it out of sight.

I headed outside and was relieved to see that the girls hadn't run off again. I'd made sure to very firmly tell them to stay put this time.

"Who's on the third floor?"

"Uhhh... Hilde, I think. She should be right down here."

As I answered Linze's question, I glanced up at the information board by the fourth floor's elevator. It said "Fifth Floor: Arcade, Cafe, 100-yen Store, Home and Hardware Store, Bedding Store." That was the floor we'd just come from. I quickly looked to the other part of the board and finally found the right part. It said "Third Floor: Children's Clothing, Sports Goods, Kimonos, Baby Supplies, Toystore."

We took the escalator down and soon found Hilde. She was inside a store, holding a piece of merchandise with a puzzled look on her face.

"Hmm..."

"...What are you doing, Hilde?"

"Oh, Touya. This fully-armored warrior... He has many dolls in this store, as

well as numerous replicas of his weapons. Is he a famous soldier? Does he perhaps serve this country?”

“Uh... kind of... I guess? He’s definitely famous.”

That’s not armor, Hilde... It’s just his rider outfit.

The item Hilde had in her hand was an action figure of a certain famous masked hero. I didn’t quite know how to explain it, though. The entire area was filled with merchandise of the character. There were swords, guns, belts, and more.

“Do you want to buy it?”

“Yes, I do. If this hero’s that famous, I’d like to keep this as a memento.”

...But the design’ll end up completely different by the time the next season rolls around...

“Oh. That bear looks like Paula...”

“Oh, you’re right. Darling, I’d like to buy this. It can be a nice souvenir for Paula.”

*Not sure how I feel about buying a stuffed bear as a souvenir for a stuffed bear... Maybe if we applied **[Program]** to it, it could become Paula’s wife...? Husband...? Wait, is Paula a boy or a girl, anyway? I always just assumed...*

“Oh, there’s some little Ether Vehicles here...”

“Eheheh... There’s a ton, huh, Sis?”

Elze and Linze were amazed by the toy cars, but that was only a small fraction of the actual amount of merchandise available.

“Grand Duke... This one’s interesting. I want it...” Sakura said as she walked over holding a magical girl wand.

But you can cast spells without that!

I felt like if we stayed in the toy store for too long, we’d end up buying the place. We needed to get the hell out.

I picked up the action figure, the wand, and the stuffed bear, then rushed to the counter and paid for it all. The cashier probably thought they were for me...

Scratch that, she definitely did. Now that we'd found Hilde, we decided to head on downstairs once more. Yumina would be on the second floor, then we'd find Yae and Lu in the basement.

"Ah... This way."

The second floor was mostly for women's goods. It had handbags, makeup, and other such products. I didn't really fit in, but I didn't feel embarrassed, since I looked like a little kid.

Yumina was in a jewelry store not too far from the escalator. She was holding a small brooch in her hand.

"Oh, Touya. Is everyone done?"

Yumina came walking over toward us, and Leen peered at the brooch in her hand. It had a little rabbit holding a clock etched into it, clearly inspired by Alice in Wonderland.

"What a nice brooch."

"Isn't it? It's a shame it's a little coarsely made, though."

...Yumina, please don't say that while the shopkeeper is still in earshot.

This wasn't a fancy store or anything, it was more for reasonably-priced purchases. It was pretty obvious to me that it wouldn't meet the standards of royalty.

"Ooh, this pendant's really cute!"

"I like this hair clip."

Sue and Linze walked past Yumina into the store, prompting all my other brides to fan out among the accessories.

...Time for another shopping spree, huh? We still need to pick up Yae and Lu, guys!

In the end, I was overpowered, so I picked up some accessories for Yae and Lu as well. Didn't want them feeling left out. I got an ornate hairpin for Yae and a green glass bracelet for Lu. I could only hope they'd like them.

I paid, once again, and left the store. Now we could finally do what I wanted

to do, grocery shopping!

The escalator took us down to the basement, but as we got closer to the grocery store, I heard a loud commotion.

I have a bad feeling about this...

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“Ooh! This is the best, it is! It has a squishy texture, but then the flavor seeps through! It is incredible, it is!”

“Right? There aren’t any other sausages around that are as tasty as this one! You have great taste, young lady!”

“Come here, try this one out! I’m sure you’ll love it!”

“If you insist... Mmm! These peaches are so fresh and delicious, they are! They are truly addicting!”

I couldn’t believe my eyes.

When we came down the escalator, we saw Yae surrounded by some older women who were giving out free samples of food.

There was a large crowd surrounding them all, as well. They were all looking at Yae’s reaction to the samples, and deciding to buy boxes of the food. Somehow, Yae had been roped in as an unaware sales assistant.

“That looks good... When did Yae start working here, though?”

“I don’t think she is, Sue...”

It was more like she was being used. She was very much the kind of person who overreacted when it came to meals, and her reactions often made people want to try out what she was eating. This made her the perfect lure for advertising free samples.

Yae wasn’t picky when it came to her meals. She had a few things she disliked, but she’d eat just about anything available. In Yae’s mind, there were only two kinds of food: good and super good.

It wasn’t that she didn’t have a good sense of taste, mind you. She just knew what she liked, and I could respect that... But her reactions were often so over-

the-top that it honestly seemed like she'd have been a perfect TV personality.

I was mostly amazed at how she could still be eating, given we'd only recently had lunch.

Sorry, old ladies... but we're here to pick up our Yae.

Yae, who was still being fed like a baby bird, was about to have her eating spree brought to a halt.

"Oh! Big Sis, there you are!"

"Big Sis? I am your wif— Mfgh?!"

Even though I deliberately spoke like a child, Yae didn't get it and had to be muffled by Hilde before she blew our cover. I was glad Hilde wasn't quite as dense.

"Heeey. We gotta go! Mommy's lookin' for us!"

I tried talking as childishly as I could, but it ended up coming out pretty forced. I'd seen an anime about a teen who turned into a child, and it kinda went like this too... Acting like that really hurt my pride... I was ashamed of myself.

"Mommy? But my mother is in Eashen, she i—" Yae, continuing her campaign of obliviousness, was sharply elbowed in the side by Hilde.

Luckily, she finally got the picture.

"O-Oh, yes. I understand, I do. We should go back, we should."

"Aww, you're leaving?"

"Yes. I have some business to attend to, I do."

Yae apologized to the older ladies with a smile.

Just as we were about to leave, we were struck with a silent pressure from the women. With a sigh, I picked up some boxes of the goods Yae had sampled.

It wasn't such a big deal, since we needed food anyway. I just wanted to go and find Lu already.

"All the food here is so yummy, it is."

“I’m glad you like it, but we’ve gotta find Lu so we can do some grocery shopping.”

Um... I guess she’s this way...

I followed my smartphone display until we came to an aisle with frying pans and cookware. Of course she’d be here of all places.

Lu was standing in the corner, narrowing her eyes as she scrutinized a square frying pan.

“Lu.”

“Mmm...”

“Lu?”

“Huh? Oh! Touya! Sorry, I was just thinking about this pan...” Lu said as she looked up at us with a smile. I had no idea what there was to think about. It was just a frying pan, but square, right?

“I was wondering about the shape. All the other ones are round, but this one isn’t...”

“Oh, right. I think this one’s for cooking tamagoyaki. You know, egg rolls.”

I’d heard somewhere about professional cooks using separate pans just for eggs. If you used a pan for various things, the residue would stick to it, which would ruin the eggs. I didn’t know if square frying pans were common in western countries, though.

“A pan just for frying eggs... Amazing... Can I, um...”

“Yep. We can buy one. No, let’s get two, since Crea would probably like one as well.”

“Hurray! I think she will!”

Lu smiled gently as she brought the pan over to me. Crea served as Lu’s teacher in the culinary arts. The two of them had developed a close bond over the course of their cooking lessons. She’d probably be delighted to receive a gift from her apprentice.

I turned to put the pan in a basket Hilde was holding... only to see her and Yae

looking at some kitchen knives.

“This knife is not well-made, it is not. It will chip easily.”

“I agree... There isn’t much soul behind the construction. I would wager the smith didn’t care much for it.”

It’s factory-made, guys... There’s definitely a difference between handcrafted blades and mass-produced ones, though there’s been some advancement on that front in recent years. Either way, if it cuts, I’m not gonna complain much.

“Now that we’re all together again, I have to ask... What do we want to eat for dinner?”

“This!” Lu immediately answered Leen’s question in an excited tone.

I wondered what she had in mind. She held up a small card with a picture of a meal on it. The back of the card had instructions on how to cook it, as well as an ingredients list.

“I got this at the entrance. They said I could take it for free, so I thought, ‘Why not?’ I’m amazed at how clear all the instructions are!”

Oh, a free recipe card, huh? Looks like you picked up quite a few...

“They all look so delicious! I’m itching to try cooking them!”

Lu’s eyes were positively blazing. I’d given her tons of recipes for dishes from Earth, but so far she’d had to make do with ingredients from the other world. However, now she finally had the opportunity to cook meals with authentic interdimensional ingredients, so I couldn’t blame her for being excited.

But you won’t have time to cook all of these, right?

“There are a few too many dishes, so try focusing on a couple you like.”

Think about it this way, we’re not gonna be here forever. We won’t be able to eat all of these meals...

“Yae’s here, though.”

“...Point taken.”

Yae was certainly the master of waste disposal in our household.

For the time being, we walked around the grocery store, checking off everything on Lu's list. I'd never been to this grocery store before, but Japan's rigid system of labeling and structure made finding our way around simple.

There were veggies, meat, fresh fish, and more. We even picked up a couple of boxed lunches.

We got sidetracked once or twice. Sue went to the candy aisle, while Linze and Sakura wanted to try some ice cream. Eventually, though, we got all our ingredients. The rice was really heavy, and they'd bought way too much dessert.

I almost died from shock when I saw the total price at the checkout counter. Sure, I'd become unreasonably rich in the other world, but seeing such a vast amount of yen on the screen messed with my head.

I wondered if that was normal for a family of nine... Though, without Yae, the cost probably would've halved. Still, with nine of us, there was plenty to share, so it would make for a lot of fun.

We merrily left the grocery store after that, and I found a quiet corner in the parking lot to activate **[Storage].** I made sure to take the extra precaution of having the girls surround me like a barricade.

Magic sure was convenient. Never again would I take it for granted.

We could've gone to a private place and used **[Gate]** to head home, but everyone wanted to see a bit more of the world, so we rode our bikes back instead.

On the way back, we found a small boutique with little trinkets and clothes. The girls did a little more shopping in there. By the time we made it back to my grandpa's house, it was almost dusk.

"It's time to do this! Linze, Sue, could you help me out?"

"Oh, okay. I'd be happy to."

"Yeah! Let's gooo!"

Lu charged headlong into the kitchen with Linze and Sue in tow. They were the best choices as far as kitchen help went.

Yumina and Hilde were royals, so they had virtually no direct cooking experience. Yae could make a few basic dishes, but her main talent was eating. Leen and Sakura just weren't interested. Elze, on the other hand, was actually quite a skilled cook... Though everything she made inexplicably became horrifically spicy.

Linze could cook just fine, and Sue had been learning a lot during her bridal lessons.

To be fair to Yae, she was a valid helper. Lu probably just didn't want her to nibble on the ingredients, since it was her first time working with Earth-based foodstuff.

"Touya! Bring the ingredients out!"

"Oh yeah, almost forgot."

I opened up **[Storage]** and dropped the bags on the kitchen table. My grandpa lived alone, but he had a very big fridge and a pretty high-grade kitchen because he often entertained guests. Plus, he enjoyed cooking as a hobby.

I prioritized ingredients that looked like they'd spoil soon for today's dinner. After cramming as much as I could in the fridge, I left the rest of the ingredients for the girls. The stuff in the fridge was mostly veggies, so they wouldn't spoil super fast, and as they got used up, they'd free more fridge space.

I went back into the living room and sat down in front of the TV. The girls had question after question about things that showed up on the broadcast. And obviously, I was the one who had to answer it all.

As the smell of food from the kitchen grew stronger and stronger, the girls got so distracted that they stopped asking me questions. Only Leen continued to probe my mind until the food was ready.

"Mealtime!" Linze's voice immediately summoned a stampede into the dining room. There was a fairly large table there, but it could only seat four people on either side. We remedied that issue by bringing in two extra chairs and placing them at either end.

"Wow, amazing!"

“This is a lavish sight, it is!”

The table was covered in various dishes. There was salmon drizzled with tartar sauce, cabbage and apple salad, swordfish in lemon sauce, potato and bok choy simmered in cream, paella with clams and chicken drumsticks, gyoza dumplings, a yakisoba noodle platter, and many other smaller sides.

I was utterly amazed by the sheer quantity of food, especially since Lu had made it all with only a hobbyist’s kitchen to work with.

“Come on, everyone, take a seat.”

Everyone grinned wide as they sat down. The plates, chopsticks, and forks were all set out.

“Let’s eat!”

We all cheered and dug in, greedily devouring the vast smorgasbord of food. Unfortunately, just like in the family restaurant, I couldn’t eat very much at all on account of my diminutive form.

Food definitely tasted different with ingredients from the other side, but maybe my obvious nostalgia and general bias tinged my opinion.

After we finished eating, Linze and the others brought out the ice cream. And they didn’t stop there. They also set out cakes, pudding, jelly, and more traditional Japanese confections. I really couldn’t believe their appetites...

I was a little worried we’d start getting fat, but they seemed happy, so I couldn’t complain. Besides, no amount of weight gain was going to stop me from loving them. Although, it was possible the divinity in them would prevent their physical forms from changing all that much... As I pondered that idea, I bit down on a sweet treat Linze passed to me.

Oh, this one’s good... I haven’t had this style of ice cream in a long time. I prefer the one wrapped in mochi, though.

“What will we be doing tomorrow, Touya-dono?”

I was amazed Yae could speak, considering how many sweet buns she was ramming down her throat.

“Well, we can’t visit my parents until they’re sleeping at night... so why don’t

we take a day trip somewhere?”

I wanted to make some fun memories.

“In that case, Touya, I would like to ride a train.”

“Me too! I wanna ride a train with Yumina!”

A train, huh? I guess that could be fun. So long as they bring their phones, and it’s not too crowded, anyway...

Just riding the train seemed a little boring, though, so we needed an actual destination...

I pulled out my phone and looked up the train line.

Museums... That’s no good. The girls don’t really know any of this world’s history.

A movie theater, maybe? Nah, they watch stuff on the smartphone projector all the time. Then again, the experience of going to the movies is pretty unique...

The amusement park’s way too far out, so how about the zoo or the aquarium? That’s within riding distance.

“A... zoo? And you say you can see lots of animals there?” Yumina asked, sounding mighty curious.

In the other world, there were regular animals... but there were also a lot of monsters, so zoos hadn’t really caught on. Some palaces had botanical gardens for wild birds and fish, but I’d never visited any.

“What kinds of animals?! Could we see one of those striped horses?!”

“Uh... maybe? I dunno...”

Don’t get too excited, Sue. I’m pretty sure most zebras are in Africa...

I looked it up on the zoo website, and apparently, they actually did have zebras. They were known as Grant’s zebras... and they were surprisingly common in zoos. I had no idea.

“Here, it looks like this.”

“Ooh!”

I projected an image showing what the zoo had to offer. Lions, tigers, kangaroos, camels, bears, chimps, gorillas, hippos, elephants, and more...

“What about food...?”

“We can eat there, Sakura. It’s okay. They’ll have a cafe or something.”

I chuckled softly as Sakura nibbled through her slice of cheesecake. She was getting worried about tomorrow’s meal a little too prematurely, I thought.

Lu probably wanted to make lunch, judging from the disappointment on her face. Even my grandpa didn’t have enough lunch boxes for ten people, and I wouldn’t be able to use **[Storage]** in a place as crowded as the zoo.

Elze stopped eating her pudding, glanced at me, then opened her mouth.

“Are there no monsters or magical beasts in this world? They’re just regular animals, right? Are any of them dangerous?”

“They’re all in enclosures or cages, so there’s no risk. Some are dangerous, though.”

“Can I punch one if it chases me?”

“No! I mean, that’ll never happen, but I guess if it really comes down to it, maybe...?”

I didn’t think it would happen, but if a lion or tiger happened to escape, then Elze had my full blessing to kick its butt. If it was just a goat or a red panda, though... not so much.

I knew for a fact that Elze could probably kill anything in that zoo. Even without her **[Boost]** enchantment, she could clobber a gorilla or an elephant.

“Hey, isn’t that a bit rude?!”

“What, no way! It’s mine!”

“Really. Really now, Linze? You’re gonna pretend I didn’t see it first?!”

“First come, first served!”

Elze and Linze started bickering over a cream shortcake... I really couldn’t believe how many desserts they’d eaten. It seemed like, when it came to sweet foods, everyone was Yae.

“I hope I am not overstepping my bounds, I do...”

“Don’t sweat it, just keep eating!”

“Yeah, feel free to take it.”

Yae sighed softly, but the other girls encouraged her to reach for a slice of castella cake.

Hmm... Ever since we got married, the girls have been able to read my thoughts more clearly... Did they develop a telepathic link or something? Sometimes, it feels like they just know what’s being thought around them... It’s kinda like how I have that link with Kohaku and the other heavenly beasts.

Then again, it might just be because they have sharper intuitions. They’ve gotten to know each other a lot better, after all... Still, I should be careful what I think, just in case...

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It took thirty minutes by train to reach the big city from my grandpa’s town. From there, we took the subway to the zoo, which was our destination for the day.

The girls had enjoyed watching the scenery fly by on the train, but the sight of the dark subway made them shudder in fear. The rumbling noises probably didn’t help, to be fair. Yumina was the only one who gazed out into the black with curious eyes.

“An underground travel system... That’s very interesting. It’d be a fairly safe method of travel back home, since it could help avoid monsters or bandits... We could probably start building one if we employed a group of earth mages...”

An other-world subway, huh? Maybe we can think about it after Felsen figures out their magic train properly.

Yumina was pretty interested in taking inspiration from Earth, it seemed.

We walked out of the subway, and from there it was only a few minutes of walking until we reached the zoo.

It wasn’t too big, but it wasn’t that small, either. It was also fairly modern, but not to the point that it felt unwelcoming or sterile. All in all, it was a fine zoo.

Let's get those tickets... It should be a hundred and fifty yen for the kid ticket, and five-hundred yen for an adult one.

"Let's see here... I guess it'll be five kid tickets and five adult ones?"

Yae, Hilde, Elze, and Linze all looked like high school students, so they'd get the adult tickets. Sakura probably just fit into that bracket, too. Yumina and Lu were technically old enough to be high school students, but they were still kind of petite. Plus, it was better to make use of the reduced rate, all things considered.

Leen and Sue definitely looked like they were in junior high, and obviously, I fit into that category as well.

I couldn't reach up to the ticket counter, so I gave Yae the money and asked her to do it. She came back with the tickets and a small pamphlet.

"This is a map, isn't it?"

"Wow, look at all those animals."

As the twins spoke, I unfolded the pamphlet into a map. It had illustrations of animals all over it. That'd make navigating the place easier, at least.

When we entered the zoo, the tall trees all around us made it feel like we'd traveled into the wilderness. It was a weekday, so the place didn't have a ton of people. It was mostly parents with their little kids and a few junior high students in some places. Presumably, they were on a field trip.

A few pigeons were hanging out on some nearby benches, but something told me they weren't part of the zoo attraction. Pigeons just had a habit of gathering around places with food.

"Ooh! Look at that white birdie!" Sue pointed forward and charged a nearby pond.



I didn’t think much of the birds Sue was so enamored by, but they weren’t a super common sight from our castle. Though, if she’d ask Kougyoku, I was sure she could see whatever kinds of birds she wanted...

Still, there were definitely a lot of birds by the pond enclosure. I glanced toward a nearby plaque that listed them.

“Whooper swans, tundra swans, snow geese, and spot-billed ducks...”

They were definitely swans, geese, and ducks. That made sense. Some of them made loud honking noises from behind the fence.

I’d seen swans on TV before, but never actually in person. It was kind of cool to look at them up close.

I glanced down and noticed some of the pigeons eating the swans’ leftover food. That explained their presence.

“Touya... Is that a bird as well?”

“Hm? Whoa! It’s a penguin!”

Hilde pointed at another nearby pool, and much to my surprise, there was a penguin there. I’d never seen one before, so that was really cool!

I was maybe a little too excited, but I just rolled with it, since it wasn’t out of character for a five-year-old to act rowdy at a zoo.

The information plate said it was a Humboldt penguin. There were quite a few of them waddling around. It also listed their individual names, but I couldn’t tell them apart. I wondered if the person who cared for them knew the difference...

“So cute...”

“Yes... I want to take one home...”

Yumina and Lu instantly fell in love with the adorable penguins. Personally, I thought the sight of their smiling faces was far cuter than the birds.

We reluctantly headed away from the penguin display, then carried on until we saw some llamas.

Wait, are these llamas? They look a little funny.

I checked the information plate, just to be sure.

Ohhh... They're llamas, I guess? I think they might be more related to those humpless Andes camels, though.

Everyone looked over at the llamas as I read the information aloud.

"Let's see... When angered, the llama will spit a foul-smelling substance at its aggressor. This substance is derived from stomach acid..."

Once I finished reading, I noticed the girls had backed up as far as possible.

Wait, what's that smell?

I nervously glanced at a nearby llama, and it was craning its neck back as if preparing something. That was all I needed to see to escort everyone away from the beast.

Next, we saw some Bactrian camels. They were massive... With those two humps, it looked like they'd be easy to ride.

Apparently, they were used as mounts in deserts because they could go days at a time without drinking water. That made them unique in such dry climates. With the aid of the camel, humanity managed to dominate those sandy dunes.

It's just standing there menacingly... The thing's barely moving at all... Oh wait, it kinda twitched a little, I guess...

"It's not doing much... Is it a slow animal?"

"I think some cultures have camel races, so it's probably fast if it wants to be. There's just no reason for it to act right now."

The camel's enclosure, surrounded by a fence and a small moat, wasn't all that big. It probably didn't need to trot around at high speeds.

We waved our goodbyes to the motionless creature and carried on to the next exhibit, which contained a red panda. It was bigger than I thought it'd be, but about as cute as I'd expected.

For some reason, it kept prowling the perimeter of the fence, but it didn't stand up on its hind legs like the one I'd seen on television.

We walked down the path some more, seeing animals like Japanese

macaques having fun in their playground, black bears lazing in the sun, and wild boars taking muddy naps.

“They’re tiny... Really cute...” Sakura was enchanted by the sight of several black-tailed prairie dogs playing with each other. Or at least, I assumed they were black-tailed prairie dogs on account of their black tails.

One of them stood by the entrance of the burrow, feeding himself with his tiny paws. If I remembered right, he was basically acting as a sentry.

“They’re hugging! They’re hugging!” Hilde cheered out in sheer amazement as two of the prairie dogs gave each other a big hug. They even moved to kiss each other shortly after that. I remembered reading somewhere about how they greeted each other, and that seemed to line up. With happy expressions, we moved on to the next enclosure.

“King of the jungle? That means it must be dangerous, no? It doesn’t seem all that scary...”

I understood Leen’s feelings as she read the information plaque. The massive lion was laying down on his back behind the tempered glass. He was so limp and defenseless that he didn’t exactly conjure the image of a king. He looked like a big kitty, if anything.

No matter how long we stared, the cat simply stayed still.

I sure hope he’s not dead in there!

We moved to the exhibit next door and saw a Sumatran tiger. A man with a hefty-looking camera took several shots of the beast, but it didn’t really move a muscle. It looked like it was enjoying a morning catnap.

“It reminds me of Kohaku, it does...” Yae couldn’t help but make that comment, and I kind of agreed. Though, Kohaku did have some responsibilities, like commanding the mammals around town, so at least she had that going for her... Sometimes, anyway.

We left the tiger enclosure and headed into a cave-like structure. Then, we carried on through the dark until we came to a wall of tempered glass. On the other side of the glass, we spotted a pool of water that reached higher than Yae’s head. I wondered what kind of creature this enclosure was for... Seals,

perhaps?

All of a sudden, a huge white mass dove into the water. I almost fell over from the shock!

“Wh-Wh-What was that?!”

“It’s a bear! It’s a huge white bear!” Elze excitedly roared as she pressed her face up against the glass. She clenched her hands into fists the very next moment.

Wait, don’t punch the glass! It’ll break!

Elze must have realized my concern, as she lowered her hands. I didn’t know exactly how thick the glass was, but I had a feeling Elze could break it with ease.

“Geez, a bear huh...? That scared the crap out of me...”

I looked at the nearby plaque. Sure enough, it was a polar bear. I guess that made sense. We’d just seen a lion and a tiger, so the seals were probably kept in a different section.

The polar bear swam through the water with incredible ease. And eventually, it rose to the edge of the glass and stared right at us.

“Heh... This one reminds me of Paula... I do hope she’s doing okay,” Leen said as she placed a hand up against the glass, looking right into the polar bear’s eyes. The bear recoiled from her glance, then swam away immediately.

“Goodness me... Is he scared?” Leen giggled softly as the polar bear fled.

We quickly exited the polar bear cave and arrived at the birds of prey section. Various falcons, owls, eagles, and other such birds glared down at us from their perches behind high wire fences. I was in the body of a five-year-old boy, though, so I was pretty much used to being looked down on...

We finished our walk around the east side of the park, so we decided to head west. And once we did, we walked past cages of ring-tailed lemurs, lion-tailed macaques, siamangs, and chimpanzees. At one point, our walk continued up a slope that went so high I could see the swans from earlier down below.

There were quite a few groups with little kids... Though, my group was no exception. I even noticed a few elderly couples sitting around, watching the

birds together.

“Hey, what’s this pretty bird?”

“That’s an Indian peacock.”

Sue loved to comment on all the animals. The two peacocks were a vibrant blue and green. I’d read that female peacocks were more subdued in terms of coloration, so that meant they were likely males. The females, if there were any, were probably hiding somewhere in the shade.

We waited a while to see if they’d fan out their tail feathers, but they didn’t. If I recalled correctly, they only did it as a method of courtship, so that tracked.

“...Don’t male peacocks spread their feathers out toward each other, too?”

“Well... maybe if they’re trying to intimidate their opponents or something...”

For some reason, I felt like that wasn’t the answer Linze wanted.

“Oh, Touya-dono! That establishment seems to be for eating, it does!” Yae exclaimed as she pointed toward a restaurant in the middle of a park area. There was a small terrace for outdoor dining. It wasn’t noon yet, so there weren’t many people eating there.

“It’s a little early, but maybe we can...”

Before I even finished my sentence, Yae, Lu, Sue, and Sakura began speed-walking toward the restaurant. Clearly, they had their eyes on the prize.

I followed after the four of them, walking through the restaurant’s automatic doors. The moment we walked inside, we were greeted with a cheery “Welcome!”

“Wow... This place is really nice!” Linze said, seeming impressed by the restaurant’s interior. It was a wooden building, and the inside was surprisingly roomy. The warm sunlight poured through the glass windows and doors, making it feel like an outdoor space.

Hilde turned her attention toward a machine near the entrance and asked, “Touya... Is this a ticket matcheen?”

“A ticket machine, yeah. You put money in and it’ll print out a ticket, which

you can then exchange for different foods.”

The ticket machine let you pick from various dishes, and there were pictures of each meal on an acrylic panel nearby. In short, it was an electronic menu.

“Ohhh... Cute!”

“It really is.”

Elze and Leen smiled as they looked over the pictures. They weren’t wrong, the food was definitely cute.

There was a hamburg steak arranged to look like a bear paw, with cheese clumped up to form the paw pads. Then, the rice on the side of that dish was arranged to look like a bear’s head. There were other such animal-themed dishes, including curry with rice clumped to appear like an elephant, as well as a parfait with cookies shaped like rabbits and goats. There were also more regular meals like spaghetti, pizza, and omelets.

We each decided on our meals, bought our tickets, then brought them to the counter.

After we got our food, we decided to eat outside in the terrace area. It was a sunny day, so the weather was perfect for it. There weren’t any tables that seated ten people, however, so we split into two groups of five.

...Hold up, Yae. I definitely do NOT want that kiddy chair.

“Mmm... This is good... Yeah, it’s tasty.”

“It’s cute and yummy! We’ll have to get Crea to make this back home.”

Sakura and Sue had purchased the Beary Yummy Meal, which was the hamburg steak with rice. It was served with fried shrimp, salad, and fried potatoes. Quite the versatile dish, really.

Lu and Crea would definitely be able to make it, and it was the kind of thing kids loved. Which was great, since we’d have nine of them to entertain, eventually...

I sat with Sue, Sakura, Yae, and Lu. As a result, there was quite the spread of food in front of us. I could sense jealous, confused eyes from those that passed by.

“...Mm... This has quite an interesting texture... The tomatoes have a sourness and sweetness to them, but it matches perfectly with the rich nature of the cheese...” Lu muttered to herself as she ate her pizza. She’d ordered most of the food on the table, but it was Yae who ate the vast share of it. Lu had eaten a single slice of pizza, but three had already disappeared into Yae’s belly. Still, it was nice to see them sharing... Sort of.

“Mmm! This is delicious, it is!”

Lu loved savoring all kinds of food, while Yae loved devouring all kinds of food. In a way, they really worked well together. I was glad to see them happy.

The meal I’d ordered was spaghetti bolognese, and I was quite keen to tuck into it.

Ahhh... It’s so nice.

“Grand Duke, where are we going after this?”

“We’ve seen the eastern part of the zoo, so I figure we can hit the west next. There should be elephants, gorillas, rhinos, and zebras. More stuff like that.”

“Ohhh! Zebras! I can’t wait!”

Judging from the map, there were also giraffes, ostriches, and flamingos. The western side of the zoo seemed to have an African savannah theme to it.

“The animals here are very docile, they are. I heard they were locked in cages, so I assumed they would be more ferocious, I did.”

“Tigers and lions usually are pretty deadly, actually. You definitely can’t use Kohaku as a baseline. She’s way too friendly.”

The fact that the big cats we’d seen so far were mostly napping didn’t exactly help my case... We might’ve gotten to see more active animals if we did a drive-through safari where we watched the animals roam free from the safety of a car, but that would’ve proved difficult.

“Is this the only place to see animals like this? Aren’t there many in the wilderness?”

“Well... Japan doesn’t have many large animals. There are some, but they’re really rare and quite dangerous. I wouldn’t want to see any.”

Japan’s wilderness was home to some surprisingly deadly creatures. Wild boars were a real risk, for one. Otherwise, it was mostly just stray domestic animals or wild monkeys.

In the other world, it wasn’t uncommon to run into wild wolves and stuff, but feral canines weren’t exactly common here. All in all, Earth seemed to be a pretty good planet for humans... Though that made me wonder... was it any good for other animals?

Creatures like Behemoths and Dragons existed in the other world that most humans couldn’t defeat, but they couldn’t exactly live in peace with them, either.

It made me wonder what would happen if Dragons existed on Earth. Would the people here have captured them and put them in cages for display? I had a feeling that would be a pretty difficult feat, especially when you factored in their ability to fly.

There was also the fire breathing to consider... Well, Earth probably wouldn’t ever have a Dragon zoo, so it was a moot point.

“Ready to get going again?”

We finished up our desserts and started to walk around the park again. And as we moved along the path, I pulled out the brochure map again.

Hm... So we’ve got the African Zone up ahead and... a reptile house?

◇ ◇ ◇

We saw two elephants in the distance. They both looked down at the ground. Our group watched the elephants from a bridge suspended over a moat. It was a bit more natural to see them without a cage, but it was also a shame they were so far away.

“It’s pretty big... I expect it’d be hard to prepare.”

“I imagine biting through it would be tough, I do.”

I turned toward Lu and Yae, not entirely certain what they had in mind as they observed the elephants.

I think people used to eat mammoths, but I don’t know if elephants are

common food...

I looked up elephant meat on my phone and found that it was traded alongside ivory on the black market in Africa.

I didn't know if it was because I'd eaten weird stuff like Dragon meat already, but I kind of wondered what an elephant tasted like... Maybe it tasted good... I didn't plan to try it, but the thought still lingered. The elephants in front of me suddenly turned around and started heading away. Perhaps they'd read my mind?

We left the elephant area and headed to the ostrich enclosure. Much like with the elephants, we found two ostriches lingering at the edge of the moat.

"They look like Mismede's runnerfowl," Leen stated as she tapped her chin while looking at the ostriches. Apparently, there was a similar kind of bird native to the south of Mismede. Some of the beastmen there had domesticated them and trained them to pull carts, so they served as mounts.

"They eat them in Mismede, right?"

"That's correct. It tastes much like horse meat, but less fatty. I'd like to try cooking with it..."

"That sounds yummy, it does."

Lu and Yae joined in the conversation. Frankly, it made me feel concerned for the animals.

Leen was a being with a long lifespan, so she always took the chance to eat whatever kinds of interesting things she came across. I once had a friend like that, too. Though, obviously, he had a normal lifespan. He was the kind of person who'd always buy whatever new, weird flavors of soda came out. Even if he knew they'd taste bad, he couldn't stop himself from trying out new things on the off-chance they were delicious.

The ostriches, perhaps sensing the danger emanating from Yae's hungry eyes, fled for their lives.

"Ooh! Look! Zebras!" Sue screamed as she pointed over to some distant zebras, then promptly began running toward them. Everyone hurriedly followed

after her.

The zebras stood on the other side of the fence, leisurely walking around without even paying attention to us. There was a long, artificially-created river flowing between us and them.

We could see the elephants from earlier off in the distance. Clearly, the enclosure was all connected, but separated from us by the water and fencing.

“Aww... I wish I could ride one...” Sakura said quietly with a frown on her face. Some places let you do that, but this wasn’t one of them. Plus, I’d heard that zebras were kind of temperamental.

“Look! A baby!” Yumina exclaimed as she pointed toward a rock. And sure enough, there was a zebra foal there. It stuck quite close to its mother.

“What a cute baby...”

“If that’s the mom, then the dad’s gotta be that one, right?”

Linze and Elze smiled at the zebra family.

...Well, it’s hard to tell which one’s the mother and which one’s the father.

The image of an older woman watching a TV drama while a frantic dad tried to wrangle his kids came to mind.

Good luck, zebra dad...

We left the zebra family behind and moved on to the next area.

“Wow...”

“That’s a long neck...”

Yae and Hilde stared on, feeling amazed by the creature behind the fence. There stood the giraffe, the tallest creature on Earth. It was so docile and motionless that at first, I thought it must’ve been fake.

“It’s not moving...”

“No, look, it blinked.”

Just as Elze said, it moved its eyes here and there. It wasn’t doing much else, though. I wondered what it was thinking.

I hope it's not tired or stressed. I'm sure even animals have troubles like that, right?

I kind of wanted to coax it over, but I decided it was best to let the giraffe rest.

The next area had water all over the place, like a big river.

What kind of creatures live in African rivers...?

Just as I wondered that, one such creature surfaced and approached.

"A hippo!"

I've never seen one in person before. Man, it's huge. It's the second-heaviest land animal after the elephant, right? I think they range from anywhere between one and three tons... That's kinda crazy. They're supposed to be a ferocious species, especially their females when protecting their young... Can't say they look it, really... But I guess mothers can be really scary.

I certainly never wanted to get on my mother's bad side. She was my grandfather's daughter, after all... I was sure she could be even more frightening than him. Frankly, I'd rather find myself locked in a room with a lion than with my mother in a bad mood. She was really scary...

"What's wrong?"

"O-Oh, nothing... I just remembered something..."

I cowered slightly, prompting Yumina to ask after me in concern.

I had a flashback to my mischievous days in junior high... There was nothing I could do when faced with my mother's firm spankings...

We passed the hippo area and walked across a wooden bridge that went over a pond. Various flamingos were resting below. One of them had darker coloration than the others. He kind of seemed like a show-off, if you asked me.

"That one's a similar shade to your hair, Sakura. It's cute."

"Mmm..."

Linze's comment made Sakura touch her own hair and blush.

"Why are they that color?"

“It’s based on the food they eat. The pigment in it helps color their feathers.”

“Ohhh...” Elze nodded as I answered her question.

I was at least sixty percent sure I was right, but I checked the plaque, just to be sure.

Yep, says it right there. Oh, what? These are European flamingos.

I’d assumed the darker-colored flamingo was just a big eater like Yae, but it was actually an entirely different species. It was an American flamingo.

We went to the gorilla enclosure next, but they weren’t there. Apparently, they weren’t feeling well. I did manage to sneak a peek at one through the glass, but he looked a bit lethargic. I hoped they’d get better soon.

We’d visited most of the zoo at that point, so there was only one place left.

“The reptile house...”

The building’s entrance was decorated with two large carvings, one was of a snake and the other was a Dragon. The snake I understood, but surely there wouldn’t be any Dragons in there.

“Oof!”

The moment we stepped into the building, sweltering heat washed over us. The temperature in there was far hotter than outside... Clearly, it was some kind of climate control for the reptiles’ sake.

There was a paneled wall with various little habitats for different reptiles.

Ratsnakes, striped snakes, pythons, even anacondas...

Ugh... I’m pretty used to snakes because of Kokuyou, but the fact that I can’t talk to these ones makes me feel a little uneasy...

“They’re not moving much...”

“That’s because they don’t have any prey. There’s no need to zip around.”

Hilde tapped at the glass, gazing down at a rat snake. None of the snakes moved much. Most just remained coiled up.

The girls weren’t scared of the snakes, since they’d seen much scarier

monsters before... but at the same time, they clearly didn't find the snakes all that cute, either.

We walked through the area, striding past the reptiles behind the panels on the walls.

Snake, snake, turtle, turtle... Oh, a crocodile! A smooth-fronted caiman from Brazil. That's the second-smallest crocodile, I think?

"Creatures like these exist in the Sea of Trees. They're primarily used for food."

Leen's comment prompted Lu and Yae to turn their heads.

"Ohohoho... Is it delicious, is it?"

"How is it cooked? Is it roasted whole?"

"I'm not entirely sure how it's cooked. I think it's baked? It tastes quite a bit like chicken, and has a chewy texture to it."

Geez, Leen. You've got more patience than I do, considering the fact that you entertain their questions all the time like that...

Leen was secretly quite a caring and motherly person, but I had a feeling she'd be embarrassed if I pointed that out.

I crouched down and looked at some other small habitats.

Oho, an African spurred tortoise... That's much nicer than a snake.

I had a feeling Kokuyou would probably consider me a racist for saying that...

They didn't just have snakes and tortoises, there were lizards too. I saw a Japanese skink, a Chinese crocodile lizard, and a leopard gecko... They were all pretty docile.

There were a few seats nearby to rest on. I didn't personally see the appeal of sitting down while surrounded by reptiles, but I was sure there had to be some people who loved the idea.

It was pretty interesting to see the different patterns on the snakes, at least. It reminded me of how much I liked Kokuyou's scales. They were black like obsidian, which was pretty cool.

Once we left the reptile house, the regular temperature outside felt like a welcoming breeze.

Ahhh, that's nice...

I was happy to be free of the humidity. I wanted to enjoy the breeze a little longer, in fact, but Yumina suddenly pointed toward a relatively modern-looking two-story building that was nearby.

"Touya, what's that?"

"Hm? I think it's like an exhibit hall. It should have displays of skeletons, stuffed animals, and stuff like that. Oh, I think there'll be a gift store as well," I answered Yumina's question, confirming the information on my brochure.

"A gift store? I'd like to pick up some souvenirs, then."

"I would like to go as well, I would!"

"Hey, Touya! Let's go!"

"O-Okay! No need to drag me!"

Hilde, Yae, and Elze started yanking me along to the building without a care in the world for my poor little legs.

We walked through the automatic doors... and the first thing I saw was a stuffed polar bear.

...Damn, that thing's huge. Wait, what does this say...? Polar bears have transparent fur? It's not white...? Lemme read more... What? The sunlight refracts off the black skin beneath and just makes their fur look white? That's nuts! Polar bear fur is hollow like macaroni tubes, and that helps insulate them against the cold... Wow, what a textbook case of environmental adaptation.

"There's a lot of specimens here..."

Linze looked around at the stuffed animals and skeletons that lined the room. There was even a zebra skin hanging up on the wall.

"You can learn a lot from these remains... It's quite interesting," Leen muttered as she glanced between herbivore and carnivore skulls.

Wait, this is an elephant's skull? I didn't know they had no bones in their

nose... It looks totally different. I wouldn't even recognize it without the stuffed one nearby.

The room had a stuffed black bear, a stuffed antelope, a stuffed boar, stuffed pine martens, and anatomical models of birds flying in formation. They all looked surprisingly intricate.

"I like living animals better!"

"Mmm... I agree..."

Sue and Sakura didn't seem to enjoy this section of the zoo. Leen, Linze, and Yumina seemed quite interested, however. I was even surprised to see Yae and Elze peering at some skeletons.

"So the bones are weakest here, they are..."

"Looks like it. If we hit them here, here, and here... they'd definitely crumble fast."

Oh, that explains it... They're just thinking in terms of combat again...

"Ooh! It's a giraffe!" Linze exclaimed as she pointed up at an extremely tall skeleton. Standing up close to it really gave you a sense of scale... Or maybe it was just because I was shorter than usual.

"Where's the gift store?" Hilde asked as she kept glancing around, but I couldn't see one anywhere.

Oh, there's an arrow pointing to it on the wall. How convenient.

We followed the directions on the wall until we came to a set of automatic doors. The gift store was right through them. It had a warm atmosphere, with pine flooring and bright lights giving the place a more natural vibe. The shelves were lined with different animal-themed products. They had everything from cushions, to tableware, backpacks, figurines, plush toys, and more.

"Yumina! Yumina! Isn't this cute?!"

"Ohhh! It is! Look at this, Lu!"

"Hey, Sis, do you like this backpack?"

"Wow, that's nice... I wanna get one too..."

Everyone ran toward the items that interested them most. I was just glad the place wasn't as big as the mall, so there was no chance of them getting lost.

They really did have a lot of stuff... Keychains, placemats, even lunchboxes... I figured I'd take the chance to get some souvenirs for the castle denizens.

Hmm... Maybe Laim would like this tie? But it has a sheep printed on it... Oh, there's a set here with animal-ear hoodies, paw pad gloves, and paw pad slipper-socks... If the girls wore these... Man, that'd be a sight for sore eyes... I'm gonna buy some... J-Just to commemorate the occasion, obviously. I have no ulterior motives, I swear!

There were lots of animal figures lined up on a shelf. It'd be hard to collect them all. They even had a ton of stuffed animals, ranging in size from tiny to massive.

"I want this toy zebra!"

"Yeah?"

"Mhm! I'm gonna give it to Ed!" Sue said as she grinned wildly. She was being very considerate of her brother. I was certain that even though he was a baby right now, he'd come to appreciate that side of her.

Yumina picked up a stuffed lion doll for her brother, too.

King of the jungle for a future king, eh? Fitting.

We bought enough souvenirs (mostly snacks and stuffed animals) to completely shock the cashier.

There were ten of us, so there was no avoiding it... I figured I could quietly stash it with **[Storage]** once we left the zoo.

That was a pretty random detour, but we had a lot of fun. I didn't exactly think of a zoo trip when I thought of a honeymoon, but it was only the second day.

Tonight, we had a pretty big event ahead of us. I was going to introduce everyone to my parents. That was why we'd chosen Earth to begin with. I planned on using magic to put them in a fake dream-like state. They'd probably recognize me like this, but I was gonna use **[Mirage]** to project my regular form

anyway.

I wanted to tell them that I was okay, even if it was through a dream.

I wonder how they'll take the news that I have nine wives... Hell, I wonder if they'll be shocked. Oh well, whatever happens, happens. I'm ready to see them again.

Chapter IV: In Their Dreams

After returning home from the zoo, we took a short break before embarking on my most important mission. My father was a manga author, while my mother worked on picture books. But even with their unusual schedules, they didn't go to bed that late. My dad always said that pulling all-nighters would harm you in the long run. The more tired you were, the harder it was to concentrate on your work. Plus, my mother always claimed it wasn't good for her skin.

The idea of hurting yourself to make a deadline was silly, honestly. My folks firmly believed that you could only do your best when you were in good health, and I agreed with that sentiment.

Obviously, there was the odd emergency where you might have to work overtime, like if last-minute adjustments needed to be made or something.

If I remembered right, the deadline for my dad's work should've passed. Assuming things were still the same as in my memory, they'd both be resting at a reasonable hour today.

My parents didn't live too far from my grandfather. It was only around fifteen minutes away by train. The full trip was roughly an hour, though. It took thirty minutes to get to the station from my grandpa's place, then fifteen by train, then fifteen to walk to my old house.

Unfortunately, it was pretty late at night, so the trains weren't running. That wasn't a huge deal, however. We decided against walking there, since such a large crowd of people walking through the streets could potentially attract the wrong kind of attention.

"[Gate]."

I used my divinity, channeled through my smartphone, to open a portal straight to my house. I'd lived there my whole life on Earth, which made it easy to create a mental bridge there.

I took the lead and walked through the portal first. Once I did, I found myself

in a familiar living room, not too different from how I'd left it. The lights were off, so I didn't get a good look right away, but the TV was definitely a newer model than the one I'd last seen.

...Man, this is nostalgic. But I don't have time to get sentimental.

I brought my arms out and channeled my divinity just a little to cast **[Sleep Cloud],** dispersing a thin mist of sleep magic throughout the house. My folks might have been awake, which meant I had to make sure that they wouldn't bump into me, mistake me for a burglar, and call the cops or something. That wouldn't exactly have been a great reunion.

After I cast the spell, Yumina and the others came through the portal one by one.

"So this is your family home..." Linze whispered as she tiptoed around the living room. It wasn't exactly very big, so I wondered what they thought... They were used to living in castles and stuff, which made it hardly comparable.

"Now then, darling... What're we doing? Using **[Hypnosis]** or **[Mirage],** perhaps?"

"Nope. We'll use divinity to create a mental link to my parents. That way, we can appear before them in a shared dreamlike state."

I'd originally planned to just change myself like Leen suggested, but Karen had texted me saying the dream approach was better overall.

It was kind of funny that she could just text me even though I was in another world, but I was used to such oddities at this point. I'd already browsed the internet and called God Almighty multiple times from the other world. My phone was a sacred treasure, so interdimensional communication was just... possible. It was just one of those things. Yumina and the girls also had that function added to their phones.

Either way, we were just going to cut out the middleman and meet my parents in their dreams instead of just making it feel like a dream. That way, I could appear before them in whatever form I pleased.

Yumina suddenly turned to me and gave a small tilt of her head.

“Is it like when you use telepathy with your summoned beasts?”

“Uh... Something like that. It’s more like I’ll draw everyone’s consciousness into a closed space. We won’t be reading each other’s minds or anything.”

In a way, it was like connecting to an online game... I’d be creating a space out of divinity and feeding our senses into it. I couldn’t describe it that way, though. The girls had no idea what videogames were.

My parents were sleeping upstairs, so I decided to get started. I wasn’t confident in being able to localize my divinity just to their room, so I figured spreading it out and covering the whole house was fine. I was a newbie god, so going overboard probably wasn’t smart.

I told the girls to sit on the living room couch and relax, then headed to the middle of the room and closed my eyes to focus. I let my divine energy channel outward and wash over the house around me.

Slow... Deep breaths... Okay.

“Here we go... **[Connect].** ”

Everyone suddenly lost consciousness, as if they’d drifted off to sleep. One by one, their minds were linked up to the divine pseudo-reality I’d created. And eventually, once everyone had been synchronized, I let myself sink into slumber as well.

“Touya-dono, what is this place?”

“It’s a miniature world made out of my divinity... It’s kinda empty, though... I guess you could consider it similar to the inside of a **[Storage]** space.”

As I answered Yae’s question, relief set in when I noticed I’d returned to my old self.

Phew, that’s more like it!

Since we were in a virtually constructed space, I was wearing my usual coat and outfit from the other world. That was the image I most associated with myself at this point, after all.

“It’s a bit scary here... There’s a faint mist at our feet and it’s almost pitch black...”

“Oh, well... I’m supposed to be dead, right? I figured I should match the aesthetic if they’re getting visited by a ghost.”

Linze seemed a bit unnerved, but that was the point. I was trying to match the kind of atmosphere you’d see on TV or movies when people were visited by the dead. It was kind of like the divine realm, but a whole lot freakier.

“...Isn’t this a little too spooky? They might think you’re lingering with unresolved grudges if the place has this kind of vibe. You want to show them you’re happy, right?”

“Oh. Good point.”

Thanks, Elze. I probably should’ve thought about that. Guess I got carried away with the whole ghost idea! Whoops... But what kind of environment should I make instead?

“I think it should be sunny and bright... Maybe a field of flowers, too? A happy landscape should set them at ease.”

“Indeed. You need to give them the image of a happy afterlife, Touya,” Leen said as she nodded along with Hilde.

Oh, huh. I really wouldn’t have thought of that.

I snapped my fingers and the scenery changed. The space around us was illuminated with refreshing sunlight, while a gorgeous blue sky stretched out overhead. At our feet, the ominous mist was replaced by beautiful sprouting flowers.

I could change this space on a whim, kind of like the holodeck from a certain sci-fi series. Even creating smells and sounds wasn’t out of the realm of possibility! To illustrate that, I snapped my fingers once more, creating a soft breeze that carried the scent of flowers.

“Amazing... It’s so realistic,” Yumina mumbled as she crouched down to smell some roses. It wasn’t all that different from reality, since you could even touch stuff in here. I definitely didn’t have the divinity to maintain it for any longer than an hour or so, though. It was an ephemeral dream, in the end.

“What about your parents? Shouldn’t they be here?”

“They should be, yeah. I connected their minds to this space.”

As I replied to Sue, I suddenly noticed something in the distance. Someone was running through the field of flowers, heading directly toward me. There was another person not far behind, too.

The one in front was a woman in her thirties, though she actually looked about ten years younger. Her hair was bunched up and tied back, but one bushy part flowed over the front of her right shoulder. The one following behind her was a concerned-looking man in glasses who looked to be about forty.

It went without saying, but they were my parents. My father, the manga artist, Mochizuki Touichirou. My mother, the picture book writer, Mochizuki Tsuzuri.

My mother barreled toward me with a very particular look on her face. It was almost blank and expressionless. I knew it well, having lived in her house for so many years. She was in a bad mood... but why? Was she mad at me? That wouldn’t match up with the touching reunion scene I had in mind at all! Eventually, my mother arrived in front of me. She emanated a silent, dominant pressure that made Yumina and the others back off slightly.

“H-Hey, Mom... Long time no see?” I said as I smirked awkwardly, speaking the first bland thing that came to mind. My mother reached out her hand and touched my cheek. It was soft... I could feel her warmth, even in this dream space.

Her other hand approached my other cheek. Her expression warped and she began to smile gently. It was a smile I’d seen when I was a little boy.

As the nostalgia washed over me, my mother tightened her grip on my head. Then, she leaned her head backward slightly.

Huh?

My mother was about as tall as I was. She was quite the tall, slender woman in her youth. I wasn’t sure what kind of power she was hiding in that delicate frame, but for some reason, I couldn’t escape her grip.

The gentle smile was gone, replaced by a stern glare and a twisted grin.

“You freakin’ brat!”

“Gyaaah!”

I suddenly saw stars as my mother headbutted me in the face. I rolled backward, writhing in pain and clutching at my forehead.

What the hell?! I can feel pain in here? Wait... No, I can’t! It’s only because I thought it hurt! Gaaah! Go away, pain, go away... Okay, it doesn’t hurt so much now... I’m still in control here... But man, what the hell?

“You’ve got a lot of nerve showing up this late in the game! Couldn’t you have come to see us the day after you died or something?! And you’ve even got the balls to come here with nine wives in tow?! Well, look at you, Mr. Playboy! Having a heap of fun without us, huh?!”

“Wh-What?! H-How do you even know that?!”

As I scrambled to my feet, my mother simply stood there with her arms folded. I hadn’t even told her about Yumina and the others... Did she have telepathy or something?

“A-Ack... Are you okay, Touya? S-Sweetheart, even if we’re dreaming, don’t you think that’s a bit much?”

“Like I give a rat’s ass if it’s a dream or not!”

My dad called out in concern from behind my mom. Clearly, they thought they were dreaming. That was what I was hoping for, but I didn’t exactly expect to be full-on attacked. I would’ve expected a hug rather than a headbutt... She had no mercy when she was mad.

“B-But hold on, Mom. How do you know about my situation?!”

“A week ago, some weird old guy claiming to be god appeared in my dream. He said he wanted to apologize for killing you.”

“I had that dream too. He was an old man with glasses and greyish hair.”

...Wait, God Almighty showed up in my parents’ dreams? Does he still feel bad or something? Ugh, I’ve got a bad feeling about all of this.

“...So, what happened?”

“Well, obviously I was mad, so I reached out to slap him and—”

“You what?!”

“...But your father stopped me, so I decided to let it go,” Mom sulked slightly as she spoke.

“Even if it was a dream, I felt like it was a bit much to slap someone who called himself a god... The poor old man almost looked frightened. It was very awkward,” my dad sighed softly.

...Crap, I’m gonna have to apologize to him when I get home.

“I’ve got every right to be mad at that geezer. And I’m plenty mad at you, too! Dying to lightning?! Are you stupid or something?! Give me a break, kid!”

...How about you give me a break? It wasn’t just any lightning, you know?! It was crazy divine lightning. There’s no way I could’ve survived that.

“Anyway, that god asshole told us that you’d come up in a dream soon with nine freakin’ wives! It was so stupid that I was pissed off when I woke up!”

“...I had that dream too, though... Also, you both look like the real deal. Am I actually dreaming right now? Or is this something supernatural?”

I guess they both think everyone else is a dream except for them...

Dad suddenly tried pinching his cheeks, so I silently manipulated the space to blot out his pain.

“...I don’t feel anything. Guess it really is a dream. Well, that’s not surprising... But I’m happy to see you again, son. You look well... Maybe that’s a little weird to say, since you’re dead, but... yeah...”

“Dad...”

My dad laughed awkwardly. It was good to know he still marched to the beat of his own drum. Dad was either very kind or just very blunt. My mom suddenly reached up to pinch her cheek, so I willed away the pain there as well.

“...Huh? But my forehead hurt a bit earlier...”

“D-Don’t overthink it.”

“Well, okay.”

My mom rubbed her forehead a bit, but then she shrugged it off. Sometimes I was glad she didn't sweat the small stuff.

"You're a little taller, aren't you? I've seen you in my dreams now and then, but you looked the same as you did when you died all those times. Kind of a shame I won't get to see you as a man..."

My mom let out a small, sad laugh. My body was divine, so it grew a lot more slowly, but I'd probably have an adult form eventually. If God Almighty permitted it, I'd be sure to come back and visit them again then.

"But..." my mom paused and suddenly glanced over at Yumina and the others. Everyone was a little bit stunned by the headbutt they'd just witnessed, which was pretty fair. Even I'd have been surprised.

Yumina mustered up enough courage to step forward and greet her in-laws.

"U-Um... I-I'm... uh... I am... I-I am..."

"Yumina, right?"

"Huh?" Yumina was stopped in her tracks entirely by my mother's words.

...God, you even told them that much about my wives?

"The one with the long hair there must be Elze, then the short hair is Linze... The girl with the tied-up hair there must be Yae... Right, dear?"

"I think so, yeah. If I remember right, the names of the girl with the pigtails there and the golden-haired girl... are... Leen and Sue... I think? They're a little young to be wives, though..." Dad nodded quietly, identifying more of the girls.

What...? What's going on here? They know Yumina, Elze, Linze, Yae, Sue, and Leen...? How?

"As for the other three... Sorry... I haven't read that far yet!"

Lu, Hilde, and Sakura looked positively devastated as my mother failed to identify them. She seemed very apologetic.

"...Wait, what do you mean you haven't read that far?"

"You remember Himura, right? Your old classmate?"

Huh? My junior high buddy? Why bring him up now?

“He’s working as an assistant for me right now... Apparently, he’s gotten lots of dreams from your god friend.”

Wait, what? You’ve even been visiting Himura, old man?!

“He keeps getting shown visions and stories about your adventures in his dream. He came and told me about it... Said he thinks you might have been born into another world and made a new life there... Anyway, he came up with a storyboard and started penning the story.”

“He what?!”

What the hell?! A storyboard is just a rough draft, like a blueprint for a series... It has a basic representation of the composition, panel layout, characters, and so on... It’s basically a way of telling if your manga will work out or not... But he’s been drafting up a manga based on my life in the other world?! What the hell, man! Does he think he’s just getting the ideas from his dreams or something?! Why would God Almighty do this?!

“S-So wait... Where are you up to right now, story-wise?”

“Uhhh... Let me think... The most recent chapter had you recruiting a turtle and a snake.”

Sango and Kokuyou, then... That’s right before I started uncovering the Babylon stuff. We hadn’t met Lu and the other two at that point.

“I must admit, I was surprised to hear you had nine wives... I almost want to ask, but... well, it’s a dream. I’ve had many strange dreams as of late, so there’s no point questioning it.”

“R-Right...”

...Himura, please stop writing about my exploits in your manga. I’m gonna scream. It was bad enough having Babylon and the gods watch my every move, but now my parents get to see everything I do on the other side?! This is embarrassing!

I could at least take solace in the fact that it was still in rough stages and hadn’t been published yet.

“...Mmm?”

“Huh? What’s wrong, Sakura?”

Sakura, who was talking to my mother, suddenly turned around and gazed off somewhere. My mother raised an eyebrow, glancing off into the distance too.

I looked, but all I saw was an endless expanse of flowers. There was nothing in this world other than us, surely... Despite that, Sakura cupped a hand around her ear as if to focus intently. She had the special divine trait that allowed her to hear almost anything. She could pick out noises that were far beyond earshot for anyone else. But what was she hearing now?

“...There’s a strange... wailing?”

“What?”

Wailing?! Th-That’s scary! I don’t want a nightmare, just a dream!

“It kind of sounds... like a baby...? Not quite crying...”

My parents suddenly stared at each other, then started marching in the direction Sakura pointed.

Huh? What gives?

We quickly hurried after my folks, curious about what was going on.

A few moments later, we found a tiny bundled baby laying amongst the flowers. It was squirming around and looked to be on the verge of tears.

“I knew it... There, there, sweetie... You’re such a good girl. You didn’t cry. Well done...”

“Waaah...”

My mom picked up the baby, gently cradling her as she gurgled.

Wait, is this kid...?

My mom smiled softly, rocking the baby and turning her towards me.

“Look here, Fuyuka... It’s your big brother.”

“Uu...?”

...I knew it. Her eyes look kinda like mine too... This is my little sister, huh?

She must have gotten dragged in because I’d designated the entire house as

space for the **[Connect]** process.

“Ahhh... So it was Fuyuka, huh? Did she come into my dream to see her big brother?”

“I think you’ll find it’s my dream, dear. Also, of course she did. It’s only natural that my daughter is so considerate.”

“Now now, honey... I think you’ll find she’s my daughter too.”

My parents were both fussing over the baby while having a strange argument.

...Yep, these guys are as ditzy as ever when it comes to parenting. It’s no wonder I ended up learning more from Grandpa...



I felt a little bit jealous of the girl they were fawning over, but those feelings were blown aside when they passed her to me.

“Gagah...”

“Ohhh...”

Fuyuka reached her little hand out toward me. She was positively adorable... It wasn’t the first time I’d held a baby, but there was something special about seeing my little sister for the very first time.

“Oh! Wow! She’s so cute!”

“She really is!”

“She’s very cute... I know it for sure...”

Linze, Sue, and Sakura started to coo and clamor around the baby, but Fuyuka didn’t seem to mind at all.

“What was her name, again?”

“Fuyuka. It was either that or Touka, but I didn’t want her getting the Tou nickname that her dad and brother got. Not very ladylike, is it?”

My mom chuckled as she spoke to Yumina. I had that nickname back in elementary school, and my dad did as well, since his name was Touichirou.

“Baba... Gagah...”

“Careful there...”

“Bah...”

Fuyuka reached out for Linze, almost grasping for her hair. She was a bold child. Her personality was pretty aggressive, too... Not hard to tell which parent she’d taken after.

“You can hold her if you want.”

“A-Are you sure that’s okay?”

“She’s your sister-in-law, so of course it is. No need to distance yourself.”

At my mom’s urging, I handed off Fuyuka to Linze. I moved a little slowly, since I didn’t wanna drop her. Fuyuka started to wave her arms out as if to tell

me to hurry up.

“Gah... Gah...”

“Nice to meet you, Fuyuka. I’m Linze, your sister-in-law.”

“Gah!”

Linze smiled down at Fuyuka, who returned the gesture. Linze honestly had the kind of smile that could make flowers bloom... She really resembled an angel at times.

“C-Can I hold her too?”

“So long as you’re careful not to drop her, then sure.”

Elze asked for permission to hold Fuyuka next. After that, all the girls took turns cradling the little baby. She sure was a popular girl.

“She giggles a lot, she does.”

“Heh... She’s full of smiles.”

Yae passed Fuyuka, who was now laughing, over to Lu.

“She’s certainly not lacking in courage.”

“I’m not surprised, given she’s our darling’s sister... I’m sure she’ll grow up to be quite a powerful and extraordinary woman.”

“C’mon, you guys...”

I had to butt in on Hilde and Leen’s conversation. What the heck did they even mean by that? The image of Fuyuka as a Tomoe Gozen-esque legendary woman, shoving a man down, suddenly flashed through my mind. Still, so long as she grew up to have a kind heart, that’d be fine by me.

I sighed softly, then my mom patted me on the shoulder.

“We’ll take good care of Fuyuka, okay? So don’t worry about us. We miss you, but you can rest in peace.”

“Yeah... Thanks...”

I had mixed feelings about my mom saying that to me, to be honest. To my folks, this was just a dream that had come up because they’d read Himura’s

rough draft.

I wanted to tell them the truth, tell them everything... That I was a fledgling god, that I wouldn't be able to visit them very often if ever again...

If I asked God Almighty for permission, I was sure he'd let me come see them, but even that would have its limits. As a god, I wasn't allowed to show bias or favoritism toward them just because they were my family during my life in this world. Plus, I'd already decided to leave them behind and live in the other world. They were my old life, and I had a new family to look after.

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"Well, we were quite surprised to get a call from his elementary school teachers. They said Touya hadn't attended school that day, even though he'd definitely left. I was wondering if there'd been an accident or something, and then the police called us. Wanna know what happened? He was found sailing on a raft down the river! The dumb little guy built himself a raft, then needed to be rescued when it started falling apart!"

"A raft...?"

"Yep. He somehow got it into his head that he could sail to school faster than he could walk. He sounds like a real dumbass, doesn't he?"

Please stop...

My mom was happily telling stories about my childhood as she sat in the field of flowers.

I couldn't bear it any longer, so I sat a little bit away from the girls and used **[Storage]** to take out some fresh sandwiches Lu had whipped up for me and my dad.

"That's an old story, huh, son? It must've happened during your second year in junior high, right?"

"...It was my first."

I'd gotten the idea from one of my dad's books, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. After all, Sawyer was a kid and he could make a raft. Why not me? But unfortunately, the raft I cobbled together with rope and wood wasn't very

good. Just a few moments after it set sail, it started breaking apart and I fell into the water. Had to cling to a piece of wood to survive. Thankfully, it wasn't winter... or it could've ended way worse.

A lot of people got really mad at me after all that... My grandpa was madder about the shoddy raft, though.

My mom sure was comfortable in this so-called dream... She had no problem blabbing about my dark past. Though, to be honest, she was the type to tell these stories in the real world too.

The girls had gotten quite used to her pretty quickly, so they were asking a lot of questions. I just wished they wouldn't probe too hard... It was embarrassing...

"I'm surprised you're married, son. Even if this is a dream, let me congratulate you. I'm proud..."

"Yeah, seems like things are gonna get busy from here."

"Now, Touya. You should probably slow down a little. Marriage is always easier for a man. Don't wanna jostle the girls too much."

...I'm not sure if that's the case here, Dad. The girls are a lot more gung-ho than I am, at least most of the time... Maybe it's an other-world thing where women are more brazen over there.

Even the most docile of the girls, Linze, spoke her mind to me quite often. To be honest, I was more worried about not being able to keep up with them. It was a little bit silly and egocentric, but my pride as a man was on the line.

"I don't think you need to overdo it, that's all I'm saying. No point showboating for your own family. You're meant to accept each other, warts and all, so putting up pretenses and being needlessly proud proves nothing."

I had to admit that he was probably right. Even if the girls heard embarrassing things from my past, it wasn't like they'd suddenly think I was lame and hate me for it... so it was probably fine for them to hear those stories.

"Touya's first crush was this girl next door named Shouko."

"Hey wait, that's a bit much!"

I groaned slightly as I chowed down on the food in front of me.

Ugh, whatever! At least the food's nice!

"Guuu... Waaah... Ahhh..."

"Hm? Are you tired, Fuyuka?"

My sister, who was sitting in my mom's arms, moaned and yawned a little.

I wasn't surprised. She was asleep in real life, but being drawn in here was keeping her senses stimulated. Even if it wasn't her real body, she'd probably be quite mentally worn out. Still, part of me wondered if she was trying to protect me from having more stories told. I preferred to believe she was on my side, personally. What a good sister...

Being here was kind of like going through REM sleep, so it was probably hard for a baby.

"...Well, it's time for bed."

"We're done?"

I packed Lu's food back into **[Storage]** and stood up. I'd done what I wanted to do, so staying any longer would only make it harder to say goodbye. My dad glanced up at me with a frown on his face.

"I can't stay here too long, Dad. Besides, Fuyuka's sleepy. I don't wanna strain her too hard."

"I see... That's a shame."

Using **[Connect]** drained my divinity, and I was almost out of juice. I couldn't risk running out... Plus, I wanted my mom to stop embarrassing me.

My father got up, and we headed back toward the girls. Lu blushed fiercely as my dad complimented her cooking, but his comments only made my mom pout.

My grandpa and dad were great cooks, but my mom just wasn't meant for the kitchen. The best she could do was rice balls and sandwiches. To her credit, the ones she made were still pretty nice... In a way, I'd come to associate those foods with my mother, and my dad probably felt the same.

I wanted to eat her cooking again, but... well, that just wasn't possible.

"Are you leaving?"

"Mhm. I don't want Fuyuka getting too cranky tomorrow. That'd be bad for both of you."

"Googah..."

Fuyuka wriggled a bit in my mom's arms. She seemed a bit irritable, so I definitely had to get her out of here.

"Come back for the Obon festival, okay? It's a time for honoring the dead and all... I'll make those horse decorations out of cucumber and eggplant to welcome you back. And drag your grandpa along with you next time, got it? I've never seen him in my dreams before, so let him know he has a granddaughter to come meet."

"Oh, well... Sure..." I gave a vague enough response to my mom. I didn't actually know where my grandpa was. Up in the heavens somewhere, maybe? I was sure he'd have already visited us in our dreams if it were possible...

I didn't think I'd be able to come see them in time for Obon, but I quietly vowed to visit again. I wanted to see my little sister all grown up, after all.

"We'll be off, then. Take care, you two... See you later, Fuyuka."

"Heh... You too, kid. Make sure you have fun with everyone... and don't make any of these girls cry."

"I hope we meet again soon, son. Let's spend a little more time together next time."

I'd have to train up my divinity to maintain this space for longer next time, so I set that as a personal goal.

"[Disconnect]."

The mental world faded away. My vision blurred, and we all returned to reality...

"Ngh..."

I stood up from the carpet, fully conscious. Unfortunately, I was back in that

tiny body again...

“Mmmh...?”

“Hmmmh...?”

Sue woke up first, then Yumina. The other girls gradually awoke after that.

My parents and sister had been put to sleep with **[Sleep Cloud],** so there was no risk of them hearing us.

“...Huh?”

“What’s wrong?”

Just as I was about to leave, a strange sensation washed over me.

No way...

I opened the living room curtains and glanced out into the garden. God Almighty was out there. I was utterly stunned. He waved, simply standing there in the pale moonlight as if beckoning me. Someone was positioned behind him with their head hanging low.

Who is that...?

I opened the window, slipped on the sandals I’d left behind the day I died, and went outside. It was a little hard to walk in them on account of my smaller size, however...

“I see you have finished what you set out to do.”

“Hey, uh... what’s going on here? Oh, hold on... Lemme just apologize for my mom... I heard you met her...”

“Ah, pay that no mind. It was my fault. Though, I must confess... she was a little scary...”

God Almighty let out a small chuckle. Clearly, my mother was a force to be reckoned with, if she could even scare a god like him...

“So, uh... what’s up?”

“Oh, well. This person here is a servile god.”

“What?!”

“Calm down, my lad. This is not the same servile god as the one that caused chaos in the other world.”

Oh, geez... You scared me, man. I thought that NEET god got revived for a second there...

On closer inspection, the person behind God Almighty was quite young-looking. Also, she was a woman...

The NEET god was a lanky old dude, but this goddess looked a little older than Karen. She appeared to be in her late twenties or so. She had short black hair and a slender frame. For the most part, she reminded me of Moroha.

“This woman, well... she was the one in charge of the servile god that ran amok.”

Wait, she was that NEET’s supervisor or something?!

My eyes went wide, and the woman bowed her head to me.

“Please forgive my transgressions. It was through my own ineptitude that he escaped and caused you so much trouble. I would have come to apologize sooner, but I hadn’t received permission to enter the mortal realm.”

“Oh, uh... don’t worry about it. Really, that whole mess is over now.”

Being a servile god meant being at the bottom rung of the corporate ladder. But even among those servile gods, there were some with more duties and responsibilities than others. While the NEET guy was the lowest of the low, this woman seemed to have some kind of middle management position.

Apparently, she was specifically mentoring the NEET god, and they had something of a master/apprentice relationship, so it must’ve been pretty hard for her, given what happened...

“He often caused trouble, and although he would apologize, he never sounded sincere... Even when I scolded him, he did it again. One day, he just went missing, and I assumed he was just slacking off again... Never in a million years would I have expected him to do what he did.”

It must’ve come as quite the shock to her. Like if you were a private tutor that suddenly saw one of your students on the news for committing a crime.

“Rest assured, she has not been punished. We have told her many times that she is not to blame, but... try as we might, she cannot stop blaming herself. That is why I have brought her to you.”

Man, she’s really beating herself up about it. It’s not like it’s her fault or anything.

“Now, to the matter at hand. She wishes to become a guardian deity assigned to your sister.”

“Huh?!”

Wait, what? A guardian? Assigned to my sister?

“She would not exactly have divine powers. She would be a semi-divine creature sent to Earth to keep your sister safe. I suppose she would be something of a bodyguard.”

“Wait, huh?! No way! That’s crazy talk!”

“P-Please hear me out! I want to do this!”

Ugh... Damn it... This girl’s the overly serious type, huh? She gives me the vibe of the kind of person who can’t take a joke... Like an honor student or something. Even though she’s a god, I get the feeling she’s decided this is the only way she can make it up to me.

“I think you should allow it. To us divine beings, a human life is only the blink of an eye. If it makes her feel as though she has repented, then why not allow her the chance?”

“Hrmm...”

It was true that I’d thought about summoning a beast to keep Fuyuka safe, but I gave up on that plan when I realized keeping it active was impossible...

But wouldn’t defending her with a literal god be overkill?

“Would you keep your human form? I don’t get it.”

“Of course not. I’d assume animal form. Then, I’d simply become her pet, allowing me to protect her at all times.”

...From god to pet? Is this a joke? She looks dead serious, though... Gah... If

she's really set on this, then... so be it.

"Could you take the form of a dog? My parents love dogs..."

"A dog? That is possible, yes."

After she spoke, the goddess transformed into a mighty white wolf.

...Holy shit. She looks like a Siberian husky on steroids.

"How's this?"

"It's, uh... I don't know if they'd adopt you like that..."

"Really?!"

The dog-goddess flattened her ears a bit. She just looked too wild to be a housepet. She gave off the aura of a solitary wolf that belonged alone in the wilderness.

Ideally, she'd give off a good first impression, and I had just the idea that might work well.

"Could you become a puppy? I think if you're small and cute, it'll work better."

"I see... Then let me try this..."

The white wolf shimmered and flashed, gradually turning into a tiny little puppy. The wild aura from before completely disappeared.

"How about now?"

"Perfect. Now you just have to make a good first impression. Please don't speak to them, either. Dogs can't talk."

"Roger that!"

The dog snapped to attention, raising her little paw upward in a salute.

...Please don't do anything like that either.

"Sorry for the trouble."

"Nah, it'll be fine... I'm still a little worried, but I'm sure it'll turn out okay..."

"She will make a fine companion for your sister. So long as she has enough

magic stored up, she will be able to use recovery spells in case of illness or injury.”

That was quite the relief, in all honesty. It was nice to know my sister had someone looking out for her in my absence.

I turned around and noticed my wives crowding around the little white puppy.

“Ahhh! She’s so cuuute!”

“W-Wait, stop!”

“Wowie! She’s all white and fuzzy! What a cutie!”

I felt a funny sense of deja vu wash over me as I recalled Kohaku suffering in much the same way the first time she assumed her tiny form.

Well, with a little luck, everything would turn out okay. Probably.

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“Bah... Gah...”

“Hm? What’s wrong, Fuyuka?”

The woman could only watch as her daughter crawled toward the window. The baby was always in a good mood, but today she seemed a little overexcited. Part of the woman wondered if the baby had seen the dream she’d had the previous night.

The night before, she’d had a strange dream about meeting with her late son. He had nine wives with him, even. Even though it was her own dream, she couldn’t help but be surprised. There were way too many of them. They all seemed like nice girls, though.

Oddly enough, when she mentioned this to her husband... he said he’d had the exact same dream. Even when they went through the details, everything matched up quite closely. It was quite strange, in the end. For a husband and wife to have the same dream.

Still, it could be explained, perhaps, by the fact that they worked closely alongside each other and largely kept to the same schedule. Indeed, Mrs. Mochizuki had already handwaved it away as a funny little thing, but her

husband was still mulling it over a bit.

“Hmm... Maybe it was something from the spirit world after all... Probably not, though... Hard to imagine Touya astrally projecting like that...”

He was overthinking it. Probably had manga on the brain a little too much, honestly. Still, it was a very unusual dream. Certainly one of the clearer dreams he’d ever had. His daughter, Fuyuka, had even been there as well. And that made him think perhaps she’d been in the dream with them.

“No way,” Tsuzuri said as she shook her head, dismissing the idea.

Probably not, thought her husband. *And it’s not like we can ever know for sure...*

Fuyuka kept on patting the window, almost as if she wanted to go out into the garden. She seemed to be beckoning her father to open the window. The garden wasn’t visible from such a short line of sight, so she probably wanted to go outside and see the grass.

“What is it, do you want to go out?”

“Gah... Oggie... Wah!”

“...Oggie?” Tsuzuri said in confusion, tilting her head slightly. The noise wasn’t exactly one of her daughter’s usual ones.

Just as she stood up to go and open the window, she noticed a puppy sitting in the yard. It was pure white, an utterly beautiful specimen. Something about it resembled a Siberian Husky... But at the same time, it looked a little unique. Perhaps some kind of interesting crossbreed.

“Ah... Oggie...”

“Oh! Doggie!”

Finally understanding what her daughter meant, she opened up the window. Little Fuyuka almost scrambled right outside on all fours, but she was promptly stopped by her mother. There was no way she was going to allow her daughter to get mud all over her freshly-cleaned clothes.

“...Oggie!”

“I know, sweetheart. Hold on.”

She put on her sandals and walked into the garden with her daughter, greeting the immobile puppy. It was surprisingly docile, all things considered. Usually, a dog so young would be yapping all over the place.

“See? Here’s the doggie.”

“Oggie!”

“Woof!” the dog suddenly barked in response to Fuyuka’s voice, then lowered its head as if inviting her to pet it. Tsuzuri raised her brow at this, somewhat surprised at how friendly and obedient this seemingly wild puppy acted.

“You’re an obedient little thing, huh? Where are your owners?”

She tried to look for any identifying marks, but there wasn’t a collar to be found. There was still the possibility of it being a lost dog, though.

“Wuff...”

The puppy rubbed its head up against Tsuzuri’s hand.

This is bad... thought the woman. *Real bad... This puppy’s cute... Almost too cute...*



“Hm? What’s with that dog, honey?”

“Oh, sweetheart. I think it’s a stray.”

She glanced back to see her husband peering out the window. He quickly slipped his sandals on and walked down to the garden.

Her husband was a big dog lover. So was she, but she’d never actually owned one before. They once tried to adopt a dog from a friend, but Tsuzuri found herself strangely skittish and afraid of it. And even trying three times, she failed to shake the unease.

“Arf?”

They’d given up on ever getting a dog, but perhaps... Perhaps this was fate. Surely it couldn’t have been a coincidence that this puppy had graced their garden the morning after that strange dream.

The woman briefly wondered if the puppy was a reincarnated form of her son... But, almost as if to dispel that idea, the dog started shaking its head from side to side. Of course not, that would be silly.

“Touichirou... Do you think we could keep this puppy?”

“Hmm... I’d feel bad if it belonged to someone else, though...”

“Oggie! Oggie!”

“C’mon now... I think it’s a stray. And look at how much Fuyuka seems to like it.”

Fuyuka reached her arms out to try and pet the puppy, and the puppy simply allowed itself to be pet.

“Man, what a docile little thing...”

“Right? What do you think? You wanna keep him? Hey, puppy, wanna live with us?”

“Arf!” the puppy let out a cheerful bark.

The woman and the dog gazed into each other’s eyes, mutual happiness welling up inside them. In response to that, Touichirou slid his glasses back up to the bridge of his nose and opened his mouth.

“No.”

“Whaaat?!”

“Gaaah!”

“Awoo...”

Wife, daughter, and puppy all expressed their disappointment.

“Not until we’ve gone through the proper channels. We’ll need to take this puppy to the vet, then the police. We have to be entirely certain this isn’t someone else’s dog... And then, we can keep it.”

“Yay! Thanks, sweetheart!”

“Oggie! Yaaah!”

“Woof woof!” the white puppy yipped and darted around, almost in celebration.

《Whew... Infiltration complete... Now I can keep the girl safe...》 the guardian deity quietly vowed to fulfill her duty, atone for her sins, and eventually be accepted back into the divine realm once more.

She was in it for the long haul, so she’d probably have to disguise herself as multiple creatures as the girl grew older, but it was something she’d mentally prepared herself to do.

“Oof! Oof!”

“Woof!”

Thus, the Mochizuki family gained a new member. Eventually, various interesting circumstances would arise involving a young lady and her mysterious pet dog... But that was a story for another day.

◇ ◇ ◇

“Whew...”

I walked down the stairs, rubbing my tired eyes. I had trouble sleeping the night before, probably because of how late we’d stayed up. I had having a series of naps more than a proper rest.

My grandpa often had guests, so there were plenty of futons for everyone to sleep on... But unfortunately, there wasn't a bedroom big enough for all of us. And since it wouldn't have been fair for me to only spend the night with specific wives, I ended up sleeping on my own... Usually, this would spell a troubled marriage, but I could see their point.

Yesterday sure was something.

I hoped that the servile god had made it to my family okay. My parents both loved dogs, so it was probably fine. My mom was definitely a dog-lover, even if she could get nervous around them sometimes. I was sure if it made a good first impression, she'd pamper that pooch like no tomorrow. My grandpa and I were more attuned to cats, though.

Either way, if Fuyuka was being kept safe by a guardian deity, I was happy. Even if it wasn't a fully-fledged god, just having someone look after her was good in my book.

"Hmm?"

A pleasant smell wafted over from the kitchen. I walked over and saw Lu with her apron on, chopping away at various things with her knives. The morning sun shone through the window, illuminating her form. She looked beautiful.

"Oh, Touya. Good morning."

"Pretty..."

"Hm?"

"Oh, uh. Nothing! Good morning, Lu," I said as I sat down at the kitchen table. A second later, Lu passed me a freshly-brewed cup of tea.

"You're up early, Lu. Did you sleep okay?"

"I always get up at this time back at the castle. It's just part of my routine."

Lu helped out Crea, our head cook, with breakfast just about every day. Old habits died hard, apparently. If you turned something into your daily schedule, it became easier to repeat over time.

"Where's everyone else?"

“Yae, Hilde, and Elze are all up. They’re doing some mock training in the garden. Linze and Yumina are watching TV in the living room.”

Everyone sure is up early... But I guess late nights don’t really happen in the other world, come to think of it. People are usually in bed by ten.

“What about Sue?”

“Still asleep. I’m gonna let her rest a little longer, then call her down for breakfast. She’s worn out after yesterday.”

Sue, Sakura, and Leen were still in their beds. It was a little relieving to know that I wasn’t the last one up; I didn’t want to be the kind of husband who kept people waiting.

“Sue played a lot with Fuyuka yesterday, so it’s okay to let her rest a bit more. Sakura’s never been the best at getting up early... As for Leen, it’s probably...”

“...Probably what? My old age?”

“Gah?!”

I turned around and saw a sleepy-eyed Leen standing there in her pajamas.

You scared the crap outta me!

Leen didn’t have her hair bunched up when she slept, so right now her hair was all down. Honestly? She looked great like that.

“Of course not. Older people actually tend to get up earlier, silly.”

“I see. Very well, then. Lu, could I have some tea?”

“Yep. Coming right up.”

Leen rubbed her sleepy eyes as the tea was poured out in front of her.

“Are Sakura and Sue awake yet?”

“Still sleeping. Let’s have them rest a bit longer, they deserve that much. Now, darling... You’ve finished what you wanted to come here for, yes? What next?”

“Oh, well... I guess we’ll have to talk about that. I don’t think we’ll be coming back here any time soon, if ever, so we should make the most of it.”

I didn’t want my honeymoon to only consist of a trip to the zoo and meeting

up with my parents. That was kind of lame...

If I used **[Gate]** via my smartphone, we could go anywhere. Obviously, it used divinity, so I couldn't use it whenever I wanted, but a day trip would be doable.

"Oh, that reminds me..."

"What is it, darling?"

I got up and walked over to my grandpa's study. He was a very meticulous man, so the books were arranged precisely on the shelves.

Where was it, again... Oh. Here we go.

I brought a particular book back to the kitchen table.

"What is this?"

"It's a travel guide. It was written by a friend of my grandpa. I remember seeing it a long time ago."

The book had all kinds of famous locations in it. It was a bit of an old book, but the landmarks in it were still recognizable enough that I'd be able to get to them through **[Gate].**

Leen picked up the book and flipped through it.

"Hmm... Quite interesting... This seems to be quite ancient architecture. I certainly like that."

"That's Chichen Itza. It's an ancient city, like a thousand years old or so."

Chichen Itza was one of the largest ancient Mayan cities from the Postclassic period. The page Leen was on showed the famous temple structure, dedicated to the god Kukulkan. It was a massive pyramid with all kinds of intricate snake-like carvings all over it. The Mayans called the deity Kukulkan, while the Aztecs called it Quetzalcoatl.

"If the city's only a thousand years old, why is it in such a state of disrepair?"

"There's no protective magic or anything over here, remember?"

"Oh, that would explain it."

Earth magic was often used in the other world to fortify buildings, alongside

general protective spells. Really rich families would pay extra to bulk up their home foundations. If there was protective magic in this world, we'd have been able to see so many ancient structures in their prime forms... It was a bit of a shame.

The guidebook listed all kinds of places. The Sphinx, Stonehenge, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the Eiffel Tower were among them. There weren't just man-made structures in the book, though. There were also natural wonders like Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon.

There were a few Japanese landmarks, too. I was pleased to see the scenic views of Amanohashidate listed, as well as the Tokyo Tower. The Tokyo Skytree wasn't mentioned, but that was because the book was older than it.

Leen kept on flicking through the book until we all heard a ding from the microwave.

"Touya, you should wake up those two now."

"Gotcha."

I headed upstairs and found Sue and Sakura, half-hanging out of their futons.

...You guys are so slovenly... But I guess it's kinda cute in a way...

That wasn't too unusual to think, given they were my wives and all.

"Hey, Sue. It's time to get up."

"Mweh... Five more minutes..." Sue mumbled as she sleepily brushed my hand away from her shoulder. I suddenly realized Leim, her butler, probably had a pretty rough time dealing with her. Now that Sue lived with me, his duties had shifted to caring for her little brother, Ed. Although I'd actually heard that Leim was in the middle of training his son to succeed him, so perhaps retirement was on the cards.

At least that's what I'd thought at first... Apparently, he spoke to Laim and said he wanted to work in Brunhild. He probably wanted to be there to look after any kids Sue and I ended up having.

As much as I appreciated the gesture, he'd probably be waiting a while... I sighed a bit as I looked down at the sleepy Sue.

“C’mon now, it’s time to get up. Breakfast’s ready. We’re all waiting.”

“Breakfast...”

The one to reply to that wasn’t Sue, it was Sakura. She’d been completely unresponsive all this time, but the mention of food was enough to rouse her from slumber.

“...Food’s too good here... I’m gonna get fat... Really fat...”

“No, you won’t.”

“...Would you hate it if I got fat...?” Sakura mumbled slightly as she clung to her futon. She sure could be silly sometimes.

“Don’t be ridiculous, Sakura. I’ll feel the same about you no matter what.”

“Good... I’m happy...” She stopped hugging the futon and instead hugged me.

Gah, wait! I’m too small and weak for a full-on attack!

I got pushed down onto the nearby blanket, held there by Sakura’s weight.

“Hey... What’re you doing there? I wanna do it too!”

Sue had finally awoken, and she wasted no time getting in on the hug action.

Ack, wait! What are you... Nooo!

“...Just what are you all doing?”

A stern voice snapped us all back to reality. It was Linze, standing at the entryway with her hands on her hips.

“Everyone’s sitting at the dining table. You’re taking up our time.”

She narrowed her eyes slightly at the three of us. I felt a little bad. Apparently, I hadn’t come down right away, so Linze came to check on me. Whoops.

“...Sorry... We’ll come downstairs right now...”

From my prone position, I slowly looked up at Linze.

Oh crap... Don’t grin... Don’t let her know what you just saw!

“...What is it now?”

“Hmm... Did you do that on purpose...?”

“Huh? Do what?”

“We see your panties...” Sakura’s words caused Linze to grab at her skirt and back away in a flurry. We were already married, so it wasn’t that big of a deal... But at the same time, we probably shouldn’t have discarded all sense of shame.

“They’re the new ones I bought when we arrived...”

“They’re cute, but you shouldn’t wear white... You’re a married woman, so you should wear something more adult...”

“S-Sakura! That’s enough!”

Adult underwear...? Has Sakura been talking to Cesca or something? Or maybe she saw something on TV...

“I’d wear something spicier, cause I’m a married woman now! But Yumina said I shouldn’t do that yet.”

...Yeah, I’m not surprised she said that, Sue... Give it a couple more years at least.

Apparently, people from the other world lived longer than Earth humans. But even though they had this longer lifespan, the average age of death was still younger due to stuff like monster attacks and more widespread poverty.

According to Doc Babylon, the reason for most humans having longer lifespans was that almost everyone had some form of elven or demonkin blood in their family tree. A blood examination at the research laboratory revealed that Yae even had some demonkin blood in her. One of her distant ancestors was a horned creature, apparently. It wasn’t much, but it was there.

Eashen’s ruler was also part-spirit, so stuff like that wasn’t too uncommon over there. Eashen did have a clan of demonkin who called themselves the onifolk, so maybe Yae’s ancestor was one of those.

Maybe that lineage would help explain her insatiable appetite, too...

“Geez! Just get up already! The food’s gonna be gone at this rate!”

“Mm... Good point...”

“Yaeee! Don’t eat my food!”

Sue and Sakura went bounding down the stairs. I didn't think Yae would do something like that, but there was always the risk of her eating extra helpings of the side dishes before we had a chance to get to them.

"Touya... You're not gonna rest here forever, are you?"

"I wasn't even resting..."

Well, whatever. Let's get breakfast while I still can.

I grabbed Linze's hand and headed downstairs with her.

Chapter V: Back to Brunhild

“What?! Nooo! Sakura, don’t!”

“Victory is mine...” Sakura declared as her kart fired out a red shell, knocking Sue’s kart off-course and sending it into a spin.

Sue’s victory was stolen before her eyes. All she could do was watch as Sakura went over the finish line.

“How could you! I was about to win!”

“Heh.”

Sue glared, squeezing the controller tightly in her hands. The TV screen displayed Sakura’s character cheering in a victory celebration.

Sue and Sakura were playing a video game from quite a few years back. They’d found it in my grandpa’s closet a little earlier on. My grandpa was quite fond of video games, despite his relatively old age. He got into the habit of buying and keeping a lot of different ones.

I didn’t think it’d work when we found it. It was a cartridge game that was released years before I was born, after all. Quite retro, if I do say so myself. Still, even old games seemed modern and mysterious to girls from a world without much tech. They quickly got hooked on games, playing a ton one after the other. They didn’t seem bored, even after several hours. It kind of reminded me of the enthusiasm I had for games when I was younger.

We were thinking of places to go, but everyone was still tired after meeting my parents, so we just decided to lounge at home. I wasn’t entirely sure that it was the best way to spend a honeymoon, though... Still, we had **[Gate]** to take us wherever we wanted in a flash, so we could afford to relax a bit.

“Ghhh! Sakura, I’m gonna beat you this time!”

“Bring it on...”

Sue rummaged through a box of games and plucked out another cartridge. The one she’d chosen was an RPG, though... which wasn’t exactly multiplayer.

Leen quietly murmured as she watched the TV display the start of their game, featuring a king entrusting the protagonist with a mission to save the world.

“It’s not too different from the Frame Units at home, is it? Though these televideo games are more leisure-oriented, it would seem.”

“Yeah, basically...”

The Frame Units, simulations of the Frame Gears, had been designed with game-like features from the outset.

“Doctor Babylon should be happy if you bring it back to show her.”

“Yeah, good point. That reminds me actually, she did say she wanted some souvenirs...”

Doc Babylon had gone on a long-winded tangent about how she desperately needed me to bring her back as much technology from Earth’s civilizations as humanly possible.

I wasn’t quite planning on going that far, but I felt it was reasonable to at least pick up a few things for her.

I guess I should look into electrical appliances, then. Knowing her I’m sure she’ll get stuff working in the other world with magic or whatever.

Seemed like getting some electronics would be the mission for tomorrow. It’d be a matter of getting up early or going over late.

“What will you buy?”

“Maybe a fridge? A washing machine or a vacuum cleaner would be pretty useful too.”

“Oh! Yes, absolutely! Please consider a microwave and a rice cooker, too! Oh, and a gas stove! Or an oven!”

Before I could even blink, Lu had interjected my conversation with Leen and pummeled me with suggestion after suggestion.

...These are all cooking appliances, aren’t they? Wait, does a gas stove even count as an electrical appliance? I guess I can buy one, but still...

“Huh? You’re gonna buy more games?”

“No, Sue. But I was thinking of going to an electronics store. There should be a big store a short train ride away from here.”

Or at least there was three years ago. They should still be in business, it’s owned by a major corporation and all.

Yumina held out a cup of tea and passed it over to me.

“This non-magic world seems to have a very fascinating mechanical culture. In many ways, it’s like the ancient civilizations in our world, since the inventions and appliances here are so similar to the artifacts back home.”

Arthur C. Clarke once said that any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. I wondered if that was how the girls felt about Earth’s technology. In a way, being able to cook rice and keep food cold was quite magical.

“Grand Duke... Will you buy a tellyvision?” Sakura asked as she excitedly pointed toward the TV screen that Sue was playing the RPG on.

“No, I’m not gonna buy a TV. There’d be no signal over there, anyway...”

Well, we could still use it as a display for video games or something. Doc Babylon would probably want to use **[Analyze]** on one, so bringing one home would probably be fine, actually... Plus, I had a feeling Sue and the others would want to play more games.

“I think we’ll all have fun on the trip, anyway. It doesn’t just sell electronics, there’s other stuff too.”

“Is it like the shopping center?”

“Sort of. It’s not quite as diverse in terms of stuff, though.”

Lemme think... They sell toys and stationery... Actually, I think they sell bikes too. Maybe it’s not too different from the shopping center after all... Oh, wait, they don’t have food or anything there.

“Touya! The slime beat me! No fair!”

I looked at the screen, only to see Sue’s hero dying to the weakest monster in the game. I immediately identified the problem... She hadn’t equipped any of her weapons or armor.

I taught Sue how to navigate the item menu and she quickly beat the slime. But then, she had to go rest at an inn because she'd worn her character down a bit.

"This king sucks! He only gave me a Cypress Stick! How can I save the world with that?! Can't he give me a Frame Gear or something?"

I don't think that's possible, Sue... I remember thinking the same thing when I first played the game, though. But it's generally better not to think of these things in realistic terms. Just play the game as it's meant to be played.

Sue beat enough slimes to earn some more money and was just buying her new weapon when I heard Linze enter the room.

"Touya. Is there another book after this one?"

"You finished already?"

Linze had been reading a book she'd found in the study. She'd also bought a ton of books at the shopping center, but presumably, she was saving all those for home. I didn't really know what to think of her spending her whole honeymoon reading, but if she was happy I was happy.

The one she was reading right now wasn't my grandpa's, it was one that used to belong to my mom. I was a little bit surprised to know that my mom of all people had once been interested in this kind of romance novel...

"Gimme a minute to check. I'm not sure if there's any more."

I rummaged a bit through the study and found several volumes from the series, along with other books by the same author.

I handed over the books to Linze, and she happily took them.

When I glanced again into the study, I noticed that Linze hadn't been the only one engrossed in reading...

Elze, Yae, and Hilde were also reading in there. But they weren't reading the romance novels Linze was into. Yae and Hilde were reading battle shounen manga, while Elze was reading a shoujo romance manga. They were all my mom's, too. I knew cause I'd read them when I was younger.

"We're going to the electronics store tomorrow, okay? Make sure you all rest

up early.”

“Got it. Will do...”

“Roger that...”

“Okay...”

“I understand, I do...”

G-Guys! At least look at me when I’m talking! I feel a little bit neglected!

I grumbled a little as I left the study, shrugging my shoulders.

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“Whew... That’s that for shopping...”

I hauled all of our purchased appliances to a back alley, then shoved them away into **[Storage].**

Hairdryers, video games, cameras, vacuum cleaners, irons, microwaves, rice cookers, mixers, hotplates, toasters, coffee makers, and more... I’d bought an utterly ridiculous number of things.

The larger stuff like the TV, fridge, washing machine, and stove (which I got for a bargain) were all set to be delivered to my grandpa’s house later. Since we’d be leaving this world at the last possible minute, it’d be fine to wait for a delivery.

Lu went absolutely insane in there, so we ended up buying more cooking stuff than I expected. Maybe buying a chocolate fountain was a bridge too far, but at least the other world had chocolate... It wouldn’t be totally useless.

By the time we left the alleyway and looked up at the station clock, it was already well past noon.

“Wanna go get something to eat?”

“Sounds good. But where?”

Yumina seemed to agree with my course of action. As did all the other girls, except Lu... She looked a little dejected.

C’mon, Lu... You can use your new appliances to make dinner, okay?

“Well, maybe... Oh?” Hilde stopped herself mid-sentence. She was looking at a storefront. It wasn’t a restaurant, either. It was a shoe store. I briefly wondered if she wanted to go shoe shopping or something, but then I realized she was actually looking at a poster stuck to the display window.

“Touya... What is a school festival, exactly?”

“Hm? Oh, is that what the poster’s advertising? Well, it’s—”

“I know, I know! A school festival’s a thing where school classes put on their own events and stalls!”

To my surprise, Elze suddenly interjected with an explanation. I wondered how she even knew that...

“I read about it in that manga yesterday! It sounds fun!”

“Oh, that explains it...”

There was a storyline like that in the shoujo manga. I think that arc ended up spanning two whole volumes or something.

“Hmm... A student celebration...? Will there be food?”

“Yeah! There should be takoyaki, crepes, noodles, buttered potatoes, and donuts! It all looked super yummy!” Elze suddenly answered Leen’s question, but I didn’t know if that was accurate... It’d probably be different from the one she read about. Linze scanned her eyes over the poster with great interest.

“Can we attend? Is it open to the public?”

“I don’t think there are any entry restrictions. Oh, hmm... Looks like it’s just for today, too. It’s not too far from here.”

I’d only been to high school for a short while before I died, so I hadn’t had a chance to do an event like this. I was a little interested.

“Shall we go, then?”

“Yeah!”

“Mm! I wanna go, Touya! Let’s check it out!”

Elze and Sue seemed the most excited, but just about everyone seemed to agree. Thus, it was settled.

I opened up the map on my smartphone to guide us there.

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“Check out the kendo club’s special yakisoba noodles!”

“Candy apples! Get your candy apples here!”

“Come get your fortune told! Only at class 2-C!”

We passed through the school gates, only to be greeted by many overlapping voices. The festival was buzzing with excitement.

There was a stage in the schoolyard, where it looked like they were hosting some kind of event. I wondered if they had some kind of celebrity speaker or something.

“It’s so busy here! Touya, look! Look!”

“Oh, Touya! What’s a candy apple?! Oh! What’s this caramel thing?!”

I could understand Sue’s excitement, but seeing Lu get so fired up took me off-guard. She seemed to be utterly enamored by the new types of food.

“We must try everything here, we must! Let us go, girls!”

The girls all cheered in response to Yae’s rallying cry. Lu, Sue, and Sakura led the charge as they sped off to the stalls... The only problem was that they didn’t have any money! I had no choice but to follow after them, since I didn’t want anyone getting lost. They did have their phones now, at least, but I was a bit uneasy about them being out of sight.

Everyone had their own candy apples or caramel treats, except for Yae who had multiple. I personally refrained, since I’d had this kind of food before. We were certainly drawing attention, too...

It was unavoidable, sadly. Yae and I excluded, the group looked like a bunch of foreigners.

“Hey, ladies. You go to school around here? Want me to show you around?”

Welp... I had a feeling this would happen. Some guy’s trying his luck at the dating game...

A high school student with light-colored hair came up to talk to us. Or rather,

he came to talk to everyone except me. He probably thought it was fine since we were speaking Japanese.

“No, we’re fine, thank you.”

“C’mooon, don’t say that. I got some buddies around here. Why don’t we hang out? Leave the festival, have a little fun, yeah?”

Even without her mystic eye, Yumina was quick to notice the guy’s seedy intentions. She promptly rebuked him, but he wouldn’t give up.

C’mon, dumbass... Can’t you take a hint? We’re here for the festival, why would we leave?

Yumina kept on refusing, but the guy kept on pressuring her. It was kind of pissing me off.

Oh crap... Elze and Yae are getting mad too... I can tell by the look in their eye, something’s gonna happen soon if I don’t put a stop to this!

“...Spring forth, Water. Liquid Sphere: [Water Ball].”

“Huh?”

I turned around after hearing a quiet voice. Leen gave me a wink, then brought a finger up to her lips. She then walked in front of Yumina, staring down the boy.

“Don’t you think you should focus on taking yourself to the bathroom rather than taking us out? Looks like you can’t hold it any longer,” Leen stated as she pointed toward the boy’s crotch, revealing a huge wet patch.

“Huh? What?!”

I could hear murmured giggling from people nearby.

The student, obviously shocked, put his hands on his pants and quickly turned to leave.

“I-It’s not... I’m... I didn’t!”

He turned red as a beetroot, then scampered away.

Geez... I almost feel bad for the guy. Here’s hoping he doesn’t develop a complex around this...



“Did you use magic just now, Leen?”

“Yes. But I can only muster up a very tiny amount of water.”

She must’ve mustered an orb about the size of a ping pong ball and splashed it into his pants. Thankfully nobody seemed to have noticed.

“You’re okay, though? No sickness?”

“I’m fine. My kind have slightly more magic than the average human, remember?”

I was still a bit worried, since without a reliable way to recharge her magic she could’ve developed mana sickness if she’d exhausted her supply.

“Thanks for your help, Leen.”

“Not a problem. That was the least I could do to such an overconfident young man,” Leen giggled a bit as she reassured Yumina.

“What a creep... I was this close to punching his lights out.”

“I was about to strike him down as well, I was. He was not a good man, he was not.”

Elze and Yae quietly said something pretty scary. I knew it was almost too close for comfort, but still...

In the end, it was probably better to publicly humiliate him than send him to the emergency room.

“Grand Duke, what is this?”

“Hm?”

Sakura pointed towards a nearby poster. It was a poster for a show being put on by the drama club in the gymnasium. The play seemed to be an adaptation of Beauty and the Beast.

“I think some of the students are putting on a play. It should be in that building over there.”

“A play?! That sounds fascinating...!”

Linze’s eyes were sparkling as she read over the poster. Seemed like she was

itching to go. There was a morning performance that had already happened, but we had a little time before the afternoon one started.

“Let’s eat first, okay? Then we can. What do you guys wanna—?”

“I’d like to try the cotton candy!”

“Hm? Cotton... candy? SSurely they couldn’t have dipped fabric in... No...” Hilde said, seeming utterly befuddled by Lu’s words.

As if to clarify, Lu pointed toward a stall where students were putting sticks into a machine, wrapping thin edible strands around it. It wasn’t a full-on cotton candy machine. It was more of an at-home kind of toy one. Still, it got the job done and that was what was important.

“I’m interested in trying out a churro.”

“Oh, I agree, sis. It looks pretty good.”

“I wanna eat a buttered potato! Looks good!”

“Touya, I want to try that... sata andagi... What is it, exactly?”

“Grand Duke, I want potato pancakes...”

“Darling, I’m interested in the tapioca pearls.”

“Relax, guys! We’ll go in order, okay?”

The girls looked like they were about to run off, particularly Yae and Lu, but I managed to reel them back in. I was just a kid right now, so I felt pretty powerless... Part of me wondered how the scene must have looked to a bystander.

Either way, we went around eating a lot of food before the play started. Yae did most of the eating, though.

I was just glad everyone was having a good time.

◇ ◇ ◇

“That was quite an interesting tale.”

“Yeah, I liked it a lot. Acting was kinda awkward, though.”

Linze and Elze spoke their thoughts on the play after we left. I thought Elze

was a little harsh; it wasn't like it was a professional production or anything.

It was similar in some ways to the animated version of Beauty and the Beast that I'd seen, but different in others. I'd thought it was maybe some original spin on it by the students, but apparently, they were just being more faithful to the story the animated version drew from to begin with.

Because of those differences, it felt just unique enough for me to enjoy. All the girls seemed to be happy with it too.

After the show was over, we went to go see some events. There was chalkboard art, baseball practice, plastic bottle bowling, and target shooting. Yumina tried her hand at the target shooting and shocked the students by hitting every single one. Much to her joy, they gave her a stuffed toy as a prize.

I was glad to see the girls enjoying themselves in their own different ways.

As we headed out toward the gate, I noticed Hilde looking up at the school building.

"If you'd continued living here, you'd have attended a school like this, right?"

"That's right. I would've continued my highschool life, and then gone on to college... Or maybe I'd have just gone straight into the workforce. Either way, that would've been my future here."

It would've been a very different life to the one I was leading now. But I was glad to have things the way they were. At first, I simply resigned myself to my new fate, but I was now truly happy to have been reborn so I could meet these girls.

"We'll have to figure out where to go next when we get back to the house."

"I want to go somewhere with a beautiful view."

Yumina's request was simple enough. Maybe the Uyuni salt flat, or the Matterhorn... I also wanted to show her the view of a big city at night. It'd be cool to see the Skytree all lit up.

"I want to see some historical ruins," Leen spoke up.

Like Machu Picchu or the Pyramids? Wait a second... Now that I think about it, isn't Machu Picchu younger than Leen? It was built in the 15th century or

something... The Pyramids should be older than her though.

"As for what I want, Touya-dono..."

"Yep, I know. Tasty food, right?"

"I did not even finish my sentence, I did not!"

"Oh? Was I wrong?"

"You were not..."

She was easy to read. Lu seemed to approve, though. They made quite an interesting combo.

"Hey, Touya. I wanna go someplace super fun!"

"I agree with Sue... I think fun is important..." Sakura said, nodding along with Sue.

Fun, huh...? Maybe Sakura'll enjoy the Sydney Opera House.

"Well, let's figure it out once we get back to the house."

"Hey Touya, can we stop by the conbeanyance store on the way back?"

"Oh hell yeah! I wanna buy some ice cream!" Elze exclaimed, seeming excited by Linze's suggestion.

...It feels like we've been eating all day... But I guess picking up some ice cream for dessert later is fine.

It wasn't a huge deal, since we could stop by a convenience store on the way home. We stopped and bought some ice cream, snacks, and drinks. I put the ice cream into **[Storage]** right away to stop it from melting. Then we stopped by a bookstore to get a more recent travel guide. The one at my grandpa's house was useful, but it was just a little bit outdated.

While we were in the bookstore, Linze picked up a copy of Beauty and the Beast. Apparently, she'd liked the play more than I'd thought. I made a mental note to show her the animated movie sometime.

I could tell Lu was itching to try out all the new kitchen appliances once we got back home, so I let her try them all out. After all, there was no electricity in the other world, so we'd have to wait a bit for Doc Babylon to modify them all

to work with magic when we returned.

In the end, Lu used a pressure cooker, a mochi pounder, a mixer, a toaster, an air fryer, a coffee maker, and a yogurt maker, among other things. Our dinner ended up being... very varied. It was good, though.

“This is way too convenient... I won’t be able to go back to cooking things by hand...” Lu quietly groaned. I had a feeling she’d probably had the most fulfilling trip out of anyone.

After the meal, we flicked through the new guidebook to see where we wanted to go.

“How about Mont Saint-Michel?”

“What’s with the Nazca Lines? How’d they draw such a big picture?”

“Huh... The Oregon Vortex? Seems weird... Is it magic, maybe?”

The girls all chose different locations, and some of the stuff wasn’t quite suited to this time of year, but eventually, we put together a list.

Alright! Starting tomorrow we’re gonna do a world tour! I haven’t been to most of these places, so I’m excited... I’m gonna make this a memorable honeymoon for the girls! But maybe I shouldn’t be too overenthusiastic... Gotta make sure I enjoy myself, too.

With excitation welling up within my heart, I went off to sleep.

◇ ◇ ◇

All things considered, it was a good honeymoon. Over the course of two weeks, we traveled all around the world. We bought souvenirs, ate interesting food, and made wonderful memories.

Before I knew it, it was the last day of the trip. The saying about time flying when you’re having fun? It was very true.

“The Leaning Tower of Pisa was fascinating.”

“I liked the Louvre more.”

“The Moai heads were huge...”

Linze, Leen, and Sakura talked about their favorite destinations along the trip.

“The Italian gelato was the best! It had an amazing texture...”

“I thought the swiss cheese was incredible, I did.”

“That tom yum goong was crazy! It was all spicy and bitter... I couldn’t get enough!”

Lu, Yae, and Elze fervently discussed their favorite foods.

“I got a lot of souvenirs for Ed. He’s gonna be so happy.”

“The opera was fascinating, as was the subway. I’d really like to see if we could create our own versions.”

“It’s been interesting learning about the heroes and warriors of this world. I’ll have to give my brother some of these figurines.”

Sue, Yumina, and Hilde spoke amongst themselves as they sorted through the stuff they’d bought. I was happy everyone had enjoyed themselves.

I’d contacted God Almighty a bit earlier, so it wouldn’t be long until he came to take us home. I still couldn’t cross back to the other world on my own. Or to be more precise... I couldn’t quite span that kind of distance yet. I could jump to neighboring worlds just fine. Without the help of a more established God, I couldn’t quite skip too many spaces just yet.

...God Almighty is the one who’s gonna pick me up, right? He did take me...

“Bzzt! Wrong answer! It’s me, you know?”

“Ghagh!”

Just as I thought that, the goddess of love, Karen, showed up in my grandpa’s living room.

What the hell?! You?!

“O-Oh, you’ve come to pick us up, then?”

“Tsk tsk tsk, Linze! I’m your sister-in-law now, you know? Try being less nervous, okay?”

“O-Okay... I mean, okay! I’m glad to see you.”

“Ahhh, you’re so cute! C’mere and gimme a hug, you know? Kissykiss!”

“Aah?!” Linze shrieked and recoiled slightly as Karen gave her a big cuddle. She was really too excited...

“How come you’re here, Karen?”

“Well, you see... I won the game of rock-paper-scissors, you know?”

“You decided like that?!”

Were they just gonna send anyone over here? Gimme a break! Well, I guess if even lesser gods can warp through worlds it’s fine, but still!

“Opportunities to come to worlds like this don’t come often, you know? Gotta make the most of it!”

That’s a pretty lame reason, but whatever... I guess I should be thankful she came to get us.

“Alright, time to head home. I’m sure we have plenty to catch up on.”

“Huh! Are you sure, you know?!” Karen exclaimed as she stared at me in shock.

Wh-What’s with that expression?!

“Don’t you wanna stay a bit longer? You could see more things, you know? Isn’t there more you wanna do here?”

“Nope. I’ve already seen, done, and bought everything I wanted.”

“W-Wait! But I just got here! Cut me some slack, you know? I made Moroha super jealous, don’t let that go to waste!”

Now I see. You were planning on using your role to goof off on Earth, weren’t you? Or maybe you were just trying to gloat in Moroha’s face... I’m sure she’ll totally appreciate that.

“Three days! No, even two! Just stretch out the last bit of your trip, if only a little!”

“...This is my honeymoon, you know? Don’t you think you tagging along as a third wheel is bad? You’re the goddess of love, right? You should know better.”

“Gh... H-How dare you take such a cheap shot! Obviously, as the goddess of love, I know that I shouldn’t interfere with a honeymoon! Geez! I’d rather die!”

...Would you, though?

I let out a small sigh as I watched my sister's distress. She was such a pain...

As I pondered what to do, Yumina raised her voice. "Er, Touya? I don't really mind..."

"I do not mind either, I do not. I wish for her to enjoy this delicious food, I do."

"I'm fine watching more TV!"

Yae and Sue chimed in their thoughts too. All the other girls nodded as well... They were so kind. I was glad to be married to such good-hearted girls.

"Well, if everyone agrees... we can extend the trip by two more days. Just make sure that everyone knows where we'll be, okay Karen?"

"Okay! I'll be sure to, you know? Thank you so muuuch!"

"Gwagh?!"

Karen hugged me super tight, just like she did to Linze earlier.

T-Too tight...

My childish form was almost suffocated by her massive melons, but Yae saved me just in the nick of time.

Whew... I almost left behind nine widows...

"Alright, Lu! We're gonna need a feast tonight, you know?"

"That sounds good to me. I was just thinking of making some more stuff anyway..." Lu said as she chuckled slightly and got up. I couldn't help but feel like my sister was imposing, but Lu seemed happy.

We spent the next two days showing Karen all kinds of things. It wasn't exactly a honeymoon-type trip anymore, but it was still a lot of fun.

Once we reached the final day again, Karen started to throw a tantrum saying she wasn't ready to leave yet. Suddenly she perked up, saying, "I'll ask Tokie to rewind time! We can have an extra day for as long as we want!"

But the moment I threatened to call God Almighty, she clung to my side and

told me it was just a joke. She totally wasn't kidding, though. But in the end, it was time to go back. Our long honeymoon was over.

By the end of it all, I was ready to return. I was ready to head back to Brunhild, my true home.

◇ ◇ ◇

"Tadah! We're home now, you know? Welcome home!"

"...Why are you welcoming us? You spent part of the trip with us and brought us back..."

It was kind of nice to be welcomed home, though. There were a lot of people waiting for us when we arrived. There was the butler, Laim, our head maid Lapis, our regular maids Cecile and Renne, Cesca, head chef Crea, Prime Minister Kousaka, Kohaku and the other summoned beasts, Granny Tokie, and a few others too.

"Hmm... I don't see Moroha, you know? What a mean older sister she is..."

"Not at all, Karen-sama. Moroha-sama is currently on a monster-hunting excursion in the nearby forest along with the knight order. I do believe we informed you of this three days ago."

"...Oh, you did?" Karen was utterly dumbfounded by Kousaka's statement. Apparently, she'd completely forgotten...

As I side-eyed Karen, a black shadow suddenly leaped from the darkness and tackled me to the ground. It hurt like hell!

"Welcome back, Touyaaa! Where's my present?!"

"Goddammit..."

The one to tackle me was none other than the divine gremlin herself, Mochizuki Suika. Strangely enough, she looked sober! But her eyes were bloodshot, and her lips were twisted into a manic grin like she was going through withdrawal or something.

We're roughly the same size, don't tackle me so hard!

I was about to yell at her, but her bloodshot gaze silenced me. It was like she

was silently begging me for booze, over and over again, firing an invisible alcohol-compelling force right into my brain. I was honestly kinda scared, so I quickly took out various bottles of brandy, whiskey, wine, and sake from **[Storage].** I kept a few for other people, then gave her the rest.

I'd actually taken most of these from my grandpa's house. They were in a secret place only he and I knew about, so it was fine. My parents hardly drank, anyway. That said, I left some money behind in their place just in case. I personally felt like my grandpa would've been happy knowing his booze was appreciated, rather than have it waste away in an old cellar. Whether the person appreciating it was a god or from another world didn't matter.

"Wahahah! Awesome! That's the stuff! I've been holding back on drinkin' for this!"

Suika's eyes glimmered, glinted, and bulged out of their sockets as they focused on the pile of alcohol.

...You really held off on drinking? You're crazy, dude... But I guess you must've been looking forward to this.

"Now, time to drink!"

"Wait, you're doing it right here?"

Suika popped open a bottle of sake in the blink of an eye. The scent of alcohol wafted into the room.

"Ohh... This smell... It's already too much! Amazing! Delicious!"

...Geez. Read the room, girl. I know you're crazy about booze, but have some manners...

"Now, time to chug my—"

Just as Suika was bringing the first sip to her lips, someone appeared behind her and snatched her cup away.

"Oh, master."

Elze's words signified the presence of Uncle Takeru. He swiped the cup and drank down the sake in about half a second flat.

...When did he get here? Also aren't you drinking a bit fast?

"GAAAAAAH!! Wh-What was that for?! That was my drink! You animal! You monster!" Suika started screeching uncontrollably.

"Mm... Ain't bad! Prefer my drinks with a little more kick, though!"

Uncle Takeru picked up the bottle and began tilting it back towards his mouth. Suika started screaming like a banshee, grabbing one of his legs with all her might. She was completely frantic.

"NOOO! STOOP! TAKERU, NOOOO! THAT'S MIIINE!"

"Don't be selfish. I'm plenty thirsty myself. Sharing's caring."

"AUUUGH! YOU'RE GULPING IT DOWN LIKE WATER! NOOO! THIS IS BLASPHEMY! A-AT LEAST SAVOR THE FLAVOR! NO! STOP DRINKING IT! STOP! PLEASE!" Suika's pleading fell on deaf ears. Takeru chugged down the entire bottle and skillfully balanced the empty remains atop her head. That part almost felt like salting her wounds...

"Elze, meet me at the training grounds later. Gotta make sure your arms didn't soften during your trip. Ende'll be there too."

"G-Got it..." Elze replied. Her weary expression made Takeru chuckle a bit as he wandered out of the room. That guy really had made himself at home...

Slowly but surely, Suika brought her arms out and removed the bottle from her head. A single drop rolled out from the neck and landed atop her tongue.

"I-It's good..." Suika's joyful words were contrasted by her dead, sunken eyes. A single tear dripped down to the ground.

I honestly felt bad for her...

Well... if it's come to this...

I'd been saving a bottle of Junmai Daiginjo sake, the highest grade of sake known to man, in my **[Storage].** It was a special bottle that my grandpa had put away for me... But I decided it'd be better spent on her.

"Here, take this. Don't let anyone steal it, okay?"

"T-Touya! You're amazing! I love you!"

The teary-eyed sober-drunk gave me a huge, exasperated hug. Her love for booze was as pure and simple as ever.

Suika scurried around the floor like some kind of rodent going cold turkey, before tossing the bottle into a pouch around her shoulder. It probably had the same effects as **[Storage],** since I'd seen big things go in there before. She was probably paranoid about someone stealing her drink, even if that was unlikely to happen again... But knowing her, it was always possible Karina would show up and take the bottle if she tried drinking it in public again.

"Alright, well! That's me done! Welcome home, you guys! Byebye!"

Just like that, Suika ran out of the room like the wind. She had what she wanted, so there was no point in her sticking around anymore.

"That was quite a noisy ordeal, it was."

"Hehehe... It feels like home, though," Leen replied to Yae with a little smile. Paula had shown up by the fairy's feet, and she certainly seemed happy about it, caressing the bear's head slowly.

I sent a telepathic message to my summoned beasts that amounted to "I'm home."

《Welcome back, my liege.》

I was glad to hear from them all that everything was fine. Just as I was thinking of what to do next, Lapis the head maid suddenly spoke to me.

"Er... Your Highness... How long do you intend to remain this way?"

"Hm?"

I suddenly realized what she meant. I'd forgotten about my appearance... I was tiny. Still a child, actually. I could barely bite the ankles of the adults around me, but I'd gotten used to it at this point.

...Wait, I'm home but I'm not the right size! What gives?!

I was about to impatiently stomp my feet, when Granny Tokie walked over, a gentle smile painting her face. She whispered to me, just out of earshot from everyone else.

“Worry not. That body of yours is fixed for a while longer, but it will revert soon.”

“When, exactly?”

“Not much longer. This evening at the latest.”

Whew... I was worried it’d be longer. I’d have definitely been in trouble then... Big trouble...

“Now then, let’s celebrate our return with a lavish feast tonight. I’ve learned a lot of dishes from the other wor... Uh, ahem, the honeymoon destination! Crea, I’ve brought a lot of souvenirs back! I’ll show you how to use them!”

“Hehehe... I’m looking forward to it.”

“Good. To the kitchen!” Lu suddenly broke the tension with a delicious-sounding declaration. It felt a little weird for her to be making the welcome-home feast, though, since she was on the trip too...

“I’m gonna go training with Takeru... I think I might’ve overeaten on the trip... Plus, I didn’t exercise much...” Elze’s muttering prompted Yae and Hilde to perk up.

“I-I feel the same, I do! Shall we, Hilde-dono?”

“Y-Yes! I think we need to push ourselves harder!”

The three girls walked out of the room... Or really, it was more like they fast-walked out. They seemed oddly motivated.

“I wanna go see Ed! Renne, can you come with me? I got you a souvenir too!” Sue’s words prompted Renne to look towards Lapis for confirmation. Lapis nodded her head slightly, her expression blossoming into a smile as she watched Renne run after Sue.

I transferred all of Sue’s souvenirs from my **[Storage]** to her ring’s **[Storage].** We sure did buy a lot of stuff...

I decided to use that chance to split up everyone’s souvenirs properly. Elze and the others out training could sort through their stuff later.

I used **[Gate]** to send Sue and Renne off to the Ortlinde Estate, and saw

Sakura off to go visit her mother at the school. Lu and Crea had gone to cook together, while Yumina and Linze decided to go help them out. Leen wanted to swing by Babylon's place.

That only left me...

"You're two days late, so you're behind in official affairs... Several matters need urgent attention. Fortunately, you can still handle them despite looking like a child. Let's go, Your Highness."

"B-But it was Karen's fault I'm late... Gimme a break!"

Kousaka forcibly dragged me to my work office.

Why does the honeymoon have to be over so soon? Can't I start work tomorrow instead? No? Well, at least I tried... I guess this is my life now... I wish I'd been able to take it easy just a little longer...

As the day dragged on, I returned to my regular form. I never wanted to be a little kid again. It was way more hassle than it had any right to be.

I was glad to be back to my regular size by nightfall, though... After all, I was a newlywed man. Huh, what did I mean by that? Nothing... Nothing at all. I never said anything.

Either way, I'm back. I'm right where I belong. In another world with my smartphone. Let's see what tomorrow brings, shall we?

As I leaned against the balcony and looked out to the sunset, I could feel a soft breeze blowing through my hair. Another sunset. Another day.

Afterword

Hello again, and welcome to the end of In Another World With My Smartphone Volume 21. I hope you enjoyed the read.

This volume was dedicated to the wedding and honeymoon, for the most part. Since the Japanese release of this volume was in June, I guess that makes the girls June brides. That's supposed to be good luck, or so they say.

In Japan, there aren't as many weddings in June, since it tends to rain a lot. But that's not really a big deal in another world, huh?

To get the zoo scene right, I actually visited a zoo in Sendai for research. I wrote it while I was there, even. I just walked around with my smartphone, looked at all the animals, and typed up the whole thing as I went around.

Being able to just write stuff as I saw the animals made it flow a bit easier than usual. And the path I took around the park was similar to the path I wrote for the characters, even. I did tweak some things here and there to make it a bit more interesting, however.

Oh, one funny thing happened there, actually. When I saw the polar bear, I learned that it was named Paula! That gave me a good chuckle.

I wonder if it'd be enjoyable to take this volume to the zoo with you...

Anyway, I suppose congratulations are in order. Touya finally got married! This isn't the end of the tale, though. I think the release pace will probably slow down a little from this point on, but I hope you'll keep enjoying the volumes as they come out.

Now, I'd like to give my usual thanks.

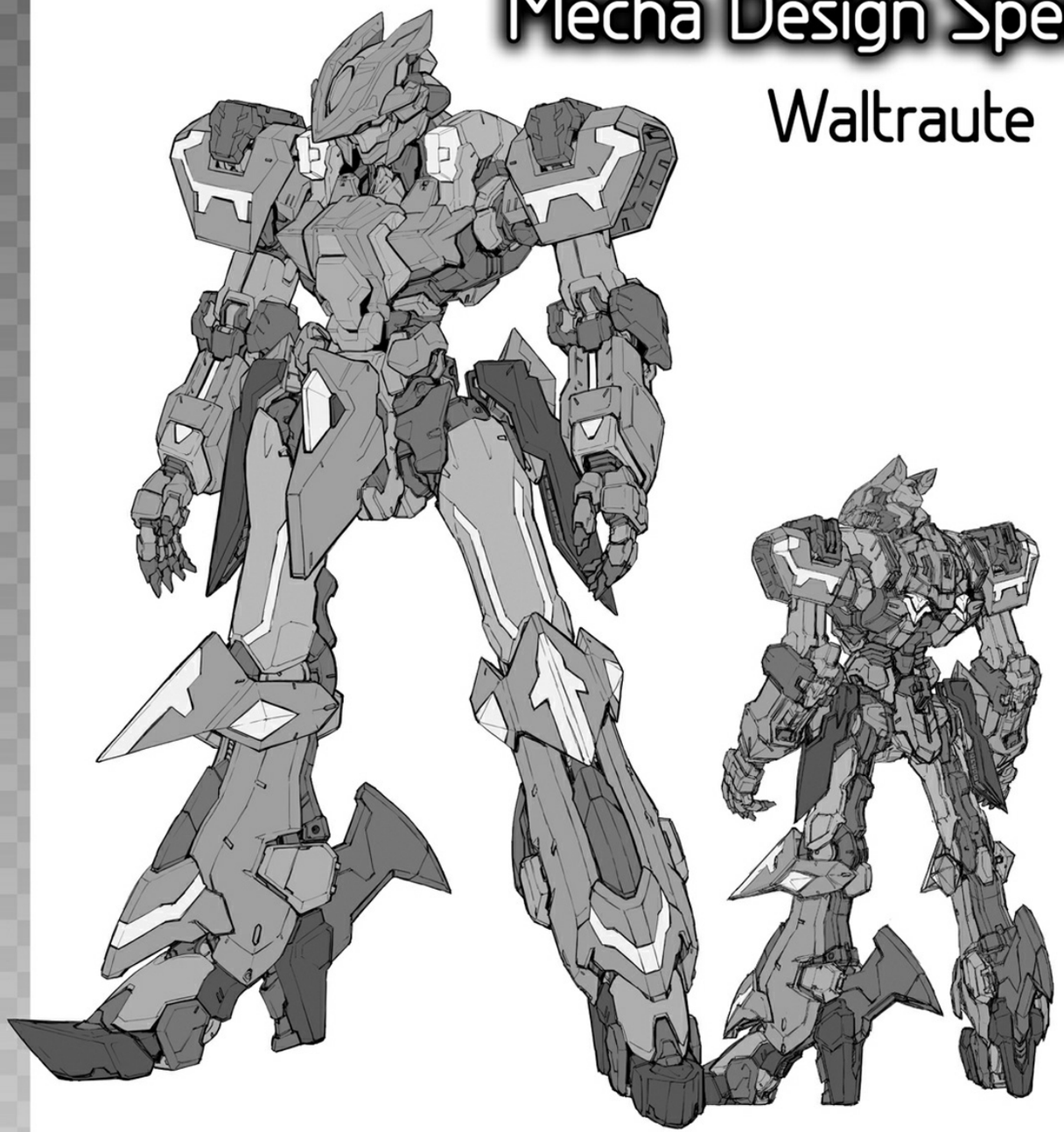
Eiji Usatsuka, you finally drew the girls in their wedding dresses... They look amazing, and I can't thank you enough. Ogasawara, I'd like to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to draw more Frame Gear stuff. And, of course, K, I'd like to thank you and everyone else in the editorial department. Oh, and naturally, I'd like to thank my readers, along with everyone who follows my work on Shousetsuka ni Narou.

Patora Fuyuhara

In Another World With My Smartphone

Mecha Design Specs

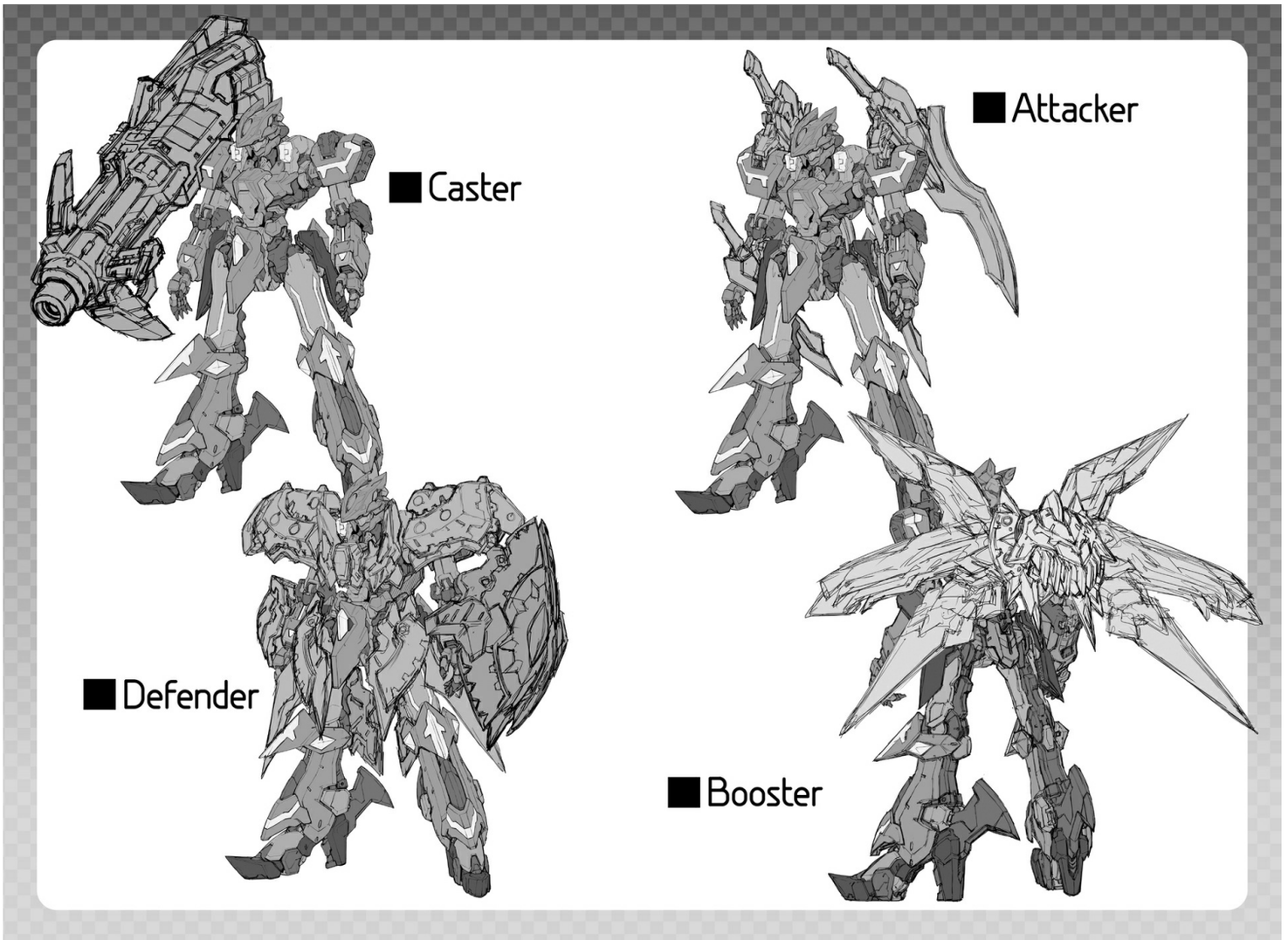
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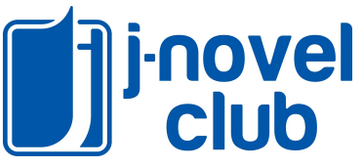


Developer: Regina Babylon, Elluka Patolakshe
Bone Frame Designer: Regina Babylon
Maintainer: High Rosetta
Affiliation: Duchy of Brunhild
Administrator: Fredmonica
Compatible Pilot: Lucia Leah Regulus
Height: 17.9m (Fully Equipped)
Weight: 7.9t (Fully Equipped)
Maximum Capacity: 1 Person
Primary Color: Green

Armaments: Shoulder-Mounted Vulcan Cannon x2, Crystal Knife x2, Blade Wing x2
A Mode: Crystal Sword x2, Crystal Greatsword x 2
B Mode: Multi-Directional Barrier
C Mode: Massive Magic Cannon
D Mode: Reinforced Armor, Hefty Shield

A new special-model Frame Gear designed specifically for Lu. One of the Valkyrie Gears, this Frame Gear was designed with versatility in mind. The ultimate support unit, it can shift between four different modes at will. These modes are Attacker, Booster, Caster, and Defender. This multi-faceted approach to combat allows Waltraute to react to any kind of situation on the battlefield.


Caster
Defender
Attacker
Booster



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In Another World With My Smartphone: Volume 21

by Patora Fuyuhara

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Edited by DxS

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